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THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS OF SIBERIA

THE SACRED GATE OF THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW,
FROM THE INTERIOR

THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS

OF

SIBERIA

BY

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AUTHOR OF "SEVENTEEN TRIPS TO SOMALILAND"

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WITH 60 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND MAP

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"Do you know the world's white roof-tree—do you know that windy rift
Where the baffling mountain-eddies chop and change?
Do you know the long day's patience, belly-down on frozen drift,
While the head of heads is feeding out of range?
It is there that I am going, where the boulders and the snow lie,
With a trusty, nimble tracker that I know.
I have sworn an oath, to keep it on the Horns of Ovis Poli,
And the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

PREFACE

THE picture of brown volcanic rocks, blue sea, and yellow sand, which is before me at the moment of writing, makes a crisp contrast with that of three months ago, when my pony's feet brushed through steppe flowers, and the horizon was bounded by snowy peaks in the heart of a continent. This is one of the advantages of being born in the nineteenth century. That most conscientious and greatest of travellers, Marco Polo, beside whom we of to-day are mere Brighton trippers, must, by the time he reached Central Asia, have carried in his mind only an imperfect recollection of the lights and music, and gondola prows, and dancing water of the Queen of Cities.

A pleasant thing it is to get away to a bit of wild nature, away from the sameness and sometimes vulgarity of our modern civilisation, to the long green slopes which lead to virgin snow-peaks, in a high borderland possessing such a rugged form and such a winter climate that it will ever be independent of man; where, in summer, flowers that will never be picked for the market, following the tasteful arrangement of perfect Nature, bloom in greater variety and wealth of colour than anywhere else in the world. The pleasantness of it all, and the fact that the leisure

was earned, must be my excuse for going so far to follow the poetry of sport.

To see scenery and get trophies and do photographs is to follow a primitive instinct. We do not change our natures much in spite of a veneer of culture, and it is only the story of the cave-dwellers and the scratchings on the reindeer bone, told over again under easier conditions with the rifle and the camera.

Ras Tarshyne, Aden,
7th November, 1903.

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THROUGH THE HIGHLANDS

OF

SIBERIA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

TWENTY years ago, at Aden, there hung, decorating the whitewashed walls of a friend's bungalow, some fine skulls of the Tibetan wild sheep (*Ovis ammon hodgsoni*).

This friend was then the champion rifle-shot of India; and about that time I was greatly interested by reading of the habits and powers of this most wary animal.

In the mess library was to be found General Kinloch's book on the large game of Kashmir and Tibet, in which this great Tibetan argali is fully described. It was considered, in India, in those days of highly

curved trajectories and short ranges, that to have bagged this sheep was to have gained the "blue ribbon" of practical rifle-shooting.

The haunts and habits of the true *Ovis ammon*, or Siberian argali, are much like those of *Ovis ammon hodgsoni*. There are the same rounded hills; the same keen, cold wind; the constant and unexpected shifting of quarters of the flock, maddening to the sportsman, and spoiling many a careful stalk; the wonderful cleverness of the rams in choosing positions which afford a clear view of miles of ground; these conditions are all repeated in the case of the Siberian argali.

These sheep show a good practical knowledge of tactics. There is an instinct, another sense unknown to man, possessed by wild game; and were I on a committee for choosing a site for a defensible post, I should be proud to have half the gift for utilising folds of the hills and looking into dead ground, that is vouchsafed by Nature to an old *Ovis ammon* ram!

The rams have a trick of lying up for a few hours during the day close to a commanding hill-top, but not actually on the summit, which would expose them too much to the bitter wind and advertise their presence for miles. They prefer to lie below the brow, their colour harmonising with the ground, look-

ing ever restlessly to front, and flanks over a perfect glacis of short grass, every saddle and spur and depression commanded by their wonderfully accurate and long sight; while as to the rising hill behind them, beyond which they cannot see, they manage to have the wind blowing over it down on to their backs, and their keen sense of smell secures them in that quarter. Their tactics are like those of a general who, with his men in khaki below the skyline, posts a picquet on the hill behind him to guard the unseen ground; but their sense of smell stands for the eyes of the sentries. Their arrangements are generally perfect when resting. But when they begin to graze away to another position, the ground they have to pass over may give them away; and herein lies the hunter's opportunity.

The persecution by wolves, from immemorial ages, has made the wild sheep the clever tactician he is, for he no doubt requires a start of a mile or more from this kind of enemy.

Since the time of first making acquaintance with sheep-trophies, the fact of having had pioneering duties in Somaliland, and the short periods of leisure in a continuous Eastern service, have given me opportunities now and then of following game; but during all these years I had looked upon the *Ovis ammon*,

living in the Chang Chenmo valley of Tibet, as beyond the stretch of my tether. A journey in 1896 after ibex in Ladak fell far short of *ammon* ground, and wild sheep in those regions must be ever becoming scarcer and more difficult.

When, however, the Badminton volumes appeared, Mr. Littledale's expeditions after Marco Polo's sheep, and later Major Cumberland's book, *Sport on the Pamirs and Turkestan Steppes*, began to attract attention to the fine wild-sheep grounds of Central Asia.

A perusal of Mr. Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game* and the photographs, therein shown, of the Siberian argali, further interested me.

The new year of 1902 found me, after another spell of over five years of service in the plains of India, in failing health, with a year's furlough to my credit, and looking out for a summer climate more bracing than that of England. Just then the perusal of an article in *Outing* magazine, describing sport in Southern Siberia, decided me to go there.

Prince Demidoff's *After Wild Sheep in the Altai* told me all there was to be known about the Siberian argali, which carries far finer horns than those of the Tibetan race; and which is quite equal, in my opinion, to the *Ovis poli* as a trophy. Mr. Fraser's

The Real Siberia gave me important information with regard to the Siberian Railway.

It seemed probable that three weeks on the ground would give me four or five trophies, which were all that were required. I knew no Russian and was a stranger to Russia; so before starting, took some lessons, which later proved invaluable in my broken intercourse with the Kalmuk followers in camp, who themselves knew a few Russian phrases and words. Much less French is spoken now, I should say, than German.

Two or three months before the start, Mr. H. W. Seton Karr, an old friend, and an experienced sportsman and traveller, agreed to join me. He is the author of several books of travel, and is well known as a collector of valuable prehistoric implements.

I was fortunate in getting a private introduction to Mr. J. O. Cattley, a gentleman of long Siberian experience, and the head of the only British firm in Novo Nicholaewsk (Ob station), our point of departure from the Siberian Railway. This introduction proved of the greatest service to me, as Mr. Cattley allowed his sons, who were anxious to travel, to come with us and give us the benefit of their local experience.

In the course of my inquiries it transpired that wapiti stags (*Cervus canadensis asiaticus*) are no longer shot on the Russian side, there being a Government prohibition, designed, no doubt, to save the few which the destructive trade in horns with China has left surviving. On the Mongolian side the maral, as it is called by the natives, is rare, and though we saw bleached horns, there were no signs of the living animal in the passes we crossed. They come sometimes in winter to the Tarkuta Pass; and there we found the skeleton of a fine old stag with his horns sawn off, killed last winter. He had been caught alive in the snow for a maralnik, or enclosed park, where the animals are kept tame, and the horns are annually sawn off while in the velvet. This stag had fallen ill and died at once under the captivity, and therefore his horns had been sawn off and the carcase left in the pass. The Chinese say that if the Russians knew how to make the prized drug from the maral horns, there would be no more selling of them to the Chinese, as the Russians would make the medicine themselves.

The Siberian roebuck is getting rather rare in the forests on the Russian side, and we did not expect to have time to go after this covert-loving game. As it turned out, in our hunting-ground on the Mongolian

side there was no vestige of a tree or bush, so there were no roebuck.

The ibex were said to carry moderate horns; Demidoff's ibex trophies measuring, so far as my memory serves me, about thirty-eight inches. These, we afterwards found, exist everywhere, both on the Siberian and Mongolian side, wherever the rounded wild-sheep hills break into steep rocks suitable to ibex. They are plentiful, in places, close to the Chuisky Tract, especially near Kouaktenar. The longest horns seen looked, on the living animal, as if they would tape to forty-two inches. These ibex seem to carry nothing like the splendid horns of the Turkestan specimens.

The trip, therefore, was to have as its objective the sheep only; nor did we expect to get anything else, and we hoped to be back in London within three months of leaving Millwall Dock. In the event, my own absence ran into three months and one day.

An account of my preliminary difficulties may be instructive to Anglo-Indians.

On a short preliminary "privilege leave" of two months, in May, 1902, I began to collect information; and should mention that Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son, though they have no tourist agency office in

Russia, were able to give me some valuable help. August found me back in India applying to the Government of India in the Foreign Department for passports for Russia, Russia in Asia, and Chinese Mongolia, to go there in June, July, and August, 1903. A hundred things might have interfered to prevent my journey, but at last, in December, 1902, I was home on a year's furlough, three months of which were to be devoted to Siberia.

To show the chances against my long-planned trip, an opportunity came in the last fortnight of going out with the columns operating in Somaliland; but this the indifferent state of my health did not permit my doing.

I have been asked whether this would be a good trip for a lady to take.

My wife decided to accompany me to Moscow, but no further; and my experience has since confirmed the wisdom of this, for the accommodation in the peasants' houses, which are the changing stations, is very rough, and the muddy yards in these villages are not suitable for camping.

During the three weeks spent in Mongolia with a pack-pony caravan, we might have camped on the hills in civilised fashion just as easily as we have already done in the Central Provinces of India; but

the expense and delay which would have been involved in bringing up full-sized Cabul tents all the way from Bisk by tarantass would have been too much for my slender resources. As the route exists at present, the journey can only be done under conditions which few ladies would care to face. We both deeply regretted this, for the grand scenery and displays of wild flowers, unsurpassed probably in the world, would have been a keen pleasure to my wife, or to any lady. The country, moreover, is perfectly safe.

Major Cumberland seems to have been the first pioneer, at least among British sportsmen, in this hunting-ground; but now "an Englishman going after kotchkor" is looked upon by the peasant settler as an accepted natural phenomenon; and the lining of his pockets is beginning to tingle. Few Russians, it is said, come here to shoot.

In this journey I have only followed in the footsteps of Major Cumberland, Messrs. Littledale and Van der Byl (who were both kind enough to give me information), and a few successors; but I look on my modest travels, undertaken with scanty resources, as a distant extension of Himalayan shooting; and therefore how to get there, and how much it costs, seem likely to be of interest to Anglo-Indians.

Where I have expressed any opinions, political or otherwise, I have done so in a humble spirit, intending them to be taken merely as first impressions, somewhat qualified by over twenty years of service in the East.

With regard to the shooting, the Kalmuks have begun to go after the wild sheep; and it is much better that reasonable white men, who are genuine sportsmen, should have a chance of seeking health and recreation in these beautiful regions, than that the game should be exterminated by the natives, who shoot for meat, act as purveyors of wounded game to the wolves, and leave the grand heads to rot on the ground.

An agent of Mr. Hagenbeck, we heard, was trying to capture them alive; and one cannot help wishing him every success, for this stately animal should prove a great attraction when he can be sent to Europe. There was formerly a big ram at Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, so a keeper told me, but whether he belonged to the true *Ovis ammon* I do not know.

The oftener real sportsmen are permitted to visit Siberia, the better it will be for the game; it means ventilation of the matter, and probable restrictions by the Russian Government on the operations of the Kalmuks, who enter the sheep-ground from the

Russian side. The ground can probably never be a proper reserve, in the African sense, for it is almost too late to begin in Siberia; and as for the Mongolian side, the Chinese Government is not likely to find it worth while to police such a remote spot, of little value, and covered with snow, as it is, for nine months of the year.

So while the game is still plentiful, I give my experience, from an Anglo-Indian point of view, for the benefit of others. I am convinced that there are many men, even in India, with sufficient means, and occasional periods of well-earned leisure, not only to take them to sheep ground, but also to enable them to dip farther into Northern Mongolia, where there are unknown hunting-grounds.

Besides the peculiar interest of sport, there is alpine scenery of the very best to be found on such a journey.

The "Chuisky Tract" was completed for wheeled traffic just as I returned from Siberia. This is the tarantass road from Ongudai, in the Altai Mountains, to Kosh-Agatch, the last Russian post. It taps a considerable trade in Chinese brick-tea, wool, and other commodities, and enables officials to get to the Mongolian frontier. It will make sport in Mongolia easier; for whenever, later, it shall have been

constituted a regular post-road, with a proper tariff of prices for non-officials and an adequate supply of vehicles at the stages, it will have brought the frontier of Chinese Mongolia within ten or eleven days of the Siberian Railway at the Ob, or well within three weeks of London.

The beautiful Altai district itself, through which the road to the frontier runs—a road the private property of the Czar and administered by officers of the Imperial Cabinet—is beginning to attract Russian visitors in search of health and pleasure, who come from the larger Siberian towns to this Asiatic Switzerland, and who find the Caucasus and the ordinary health resorts of Russia impossible owing to distance. They can be found picnicking and roughing it in peasants' houses in Altaiskoe and other villages not too far from Bisk. All Russians speak enthusiastically of the Altai.

So Siberia advances; and Southern Siberia, at least, has rather become the home of the peasant settler and his children, living among farmyard noises, than the convict-haunted waste which we used to hear about. Everywhere along the line are wooden boom towns, and building operations going on. We need not even pity the Siberiak in the winter; for then, I am told, is the lively time, when the perfect snow-

covered tracks jingle with sleigh-bells, and enormous distances are covered in the twenty-four hours, and much business done.

I never had occasion to inspect a jail, and only saw as many gangs of prisoners at railway stations as those one is accustomed to meet, under police escort, at railway stations in India.

CHAPTER II

IN PETERSBURG

ON the voyage from London to Petersburg, which lasts five days, the chief points of interest are the Kiel Canal, and later on, Reval, an old-fashioned seaport town, with clean streets and a fine church with golden cupolas, built upon a hill.

The muddy wharf and custom-house at Petersburg in early June were a bad introduction to Russia. We —my wife and I—landed late from the steamer *Una*, and the custom-house officer kept most of my baggage back, telling me to come and get it released next day.

We drove for an hour in an omnibus over cobble-stones and mud, by canals and dock basins, in a regular English drizzle, till we reached the better part of the city, when the hideous noise of stone pavements left us, and we were rolling over strips of asphalte to the Hôtel de France.

It will be difficult for me to forget the 6th June, spent in the custom-house. From early morn till late evening my baggage was handled, weighed, opened,

FISHING BOATS AT REVAL

and carted about the docks from one shed to another. There were a number of officials to see, with endless

CHURCH ON THE HILL, REVAL

formalities; and many hours to spend sitting on benches in the passages. At about three an Englishman going past looked on me with a pitying eye and

said, "You'll find these people don't know the value of time."

It is not necessary to dwell on this subject further than to say, that although my guns and ammunition and camera were exempted from duty owing to my trip being undertaken for the purpose of sport, yet the worn Indian tents, worth fifteen pounds, and a three-guinea saddle, fifteen years old, were picked out for levy of duty; the charge being forty roubles, or over four pounds, for the saddle, and about fifteen pounds for the tents, which scaled about three hundredweight, and were charged by weight. English tinned stores got off well, as I paid four pounds on thirteen pounds' worth of fresh stores bought in London.

They gave me to understand that if the tents and saddle were brought back from Siberia intact, it would be possible to recover the money; but afterwards, on inquiring from residents, it turned out that it would have required a stay of five days in Petersburg on the return journey, costing, with an interpreter and hotel expenses, nine pounds. Further, the return freight from Siberia would expand this and bring the cost of recovery above the sum to be recovered. I therefore declined to repeat my custom-house experience on coming home, and threw away most of the tents and the saddle in Siberia.

Once free of the custom-house, we got on better. A finer or more lively street than the long and straight Nevsky Prospekt (the Regent Street of Petersburg) I have not seen anywhere. There was a brightness and variety, and an absence of formality we do not see at home. The city was full, as the festivities in honour of Peter the Great had taken place only a week before.

The wide street shows off the cabs and private carriages and the beautiful Russian horses, with their small, shapely, Arab-like heads, to the best advantage. The horses trot at full speed in a business-like way, and are without vice. The high and massive wooden hoop, rising over the head of the shaft-horse and joining the shafts together, thereby reducing vibration, is hung with tinkling bells which have a cheerful sound. A very fat Isvoshchick sits behind with a hat which has not changed since the low curly-brimmed silk top hat of a hundred years ago—to be seen now in old curiosity shops in England; and there is something in its shape which seems to mark it as the missing link between our modern "topper" and the white flat-topped Russian military cap.

This coachman carries on his large fat shoulders and stomach a mass of wadding, under a neat dark-blue or green frock-coat of smooth livery cloth. The

man seems a ball of wadding; and he looks so burly that you are surprised at the falsetto voice and the little bubbling sound which issues from his lips when he wants the horse to stop, and is instantly obeyed by the sensible beast.

In the Nevsky, officers in neat, very long, light-grey overcoats parade the streets a good deal, sauntering slowly up and down, or stand in groups talking. This light grey must be far more visible than khaki on the veldt, but it must be good on snow. The large number of uniforms seen among civilians is extraordinary; for instance, professors of the Tomsk, I am told, wear a uniform; telegraph officials have uniforms and swords; and later on, on the Obi River, were to be seen what appeared to be an admiral and a commander pacing the bridge-deck of our steamer. The sea-roll was conspicuously absent, but the uniform was there, and it seemed quite accurate in every particular. On inquiry it transpired they were a judge on circuit and a sub-judge!

While speaking of telegraph offices, it is as well for the stranger to note that here and in all other public offices there is a portrait of the Czar, as well as an "ikona," or sacred picture, and it is the law of the land that hats come off on entering the room. The practice is also usual in shops. As you drive under

the sacred gate into the Kremlin, the walled citadel of Moscow, a neglect to uncover, even through ignorance or carelessness, will give rise to trouble if

A RUSSIAN CAB-DRIVER

there is anyone near. In hotels, and even the roughest peasants' houses, there is always the ikon, so the hat is taken off on entering the hall, and is kept off in a hotel dining-room. Religious observances are

constantly before the eyes of the visitor to Russia. People cross themselves as they sit down to eat; and as they stand at a railway carriage saying good-bye to their friends, they cross themselves as the train begins to move; in the public streets they cross themselves passing certain spots, where, if you look, you will find an ikon.

The Russians, like the British, seem to be the result of a mixture of various races. If there is anything in the theory that the European stock came originally from Asia, the western Europeans must have left signs of their language in the country they passed through. Here in Russia one perhaps finds the rough factory of the European race, and all the chips and shavings from tribes. There are Russians with Kirghiz faces, Russians with German faces, and yet others with Turkish faces. I saw two commissioned officers in the Nevsky talking in a fashionable group who had distinctly Indian faces. They were probably from Turkestan. The Russians have words which one recognises at once, such as kolod, cold; gus, a goose; chai, tea; asel, donkey; sabun, soap; adamant, diamond.

To going a long round of public buildings under the guidance of an interpreter I have a particular objection.

In so many public buildings and monuments in

Europe, and notably in our own country, there is a singular uniformity of design. There are those massive box-like structures with fluted pillars and steps, with straight lines dear to the photographer in a small way, high straight columns, and chain-festooned iron rail-

TELEGA, OR RUSSIAN COUNTRY CART

ings. I may be wanting in the architectural sense, but only a few public structures of great individuality appeal to me, such as Westminster Abbey, the Taj and Fort at Agra, the Shway-Dagon Pagoda, the enclosure wall at Mandalay, and the wall of the Kremlin. These appeal to everyone, and perhaps

more strongly to those who have no general taste for municipal bricks and mortar. But we saw the various buildings from the outside, and cut short the unfortunate guide many times. We were looking at the general effects of colour in this beautiful city of wide spaces.

Talking of the Taj, one hears a good deal about a thing of beauty which is above all description; but it was left to a Frenchman, whom we once overheard talking in the verandah of the hotel at Agra, to say the right thing. "What a woman," he said, "to have inspired such a devotion!"

We went into one very large church with high marble pillars on a Sunday when service was going on.

There was a large crowd, and the people in the portico were marshalled by officials who controlled the exits.

We joined one of these processions, and found ourselves inside the nave, in a vast, densely packed crowd, all standing, without chairs. The congregation seemed to be made up chiefly of peasants, labourers, and artisans. The demeanour of the people was serious, and all were constantly making the sign of the cross and passing up tapers. There was a place for the issue of tapers at the back of the nave, and

these were continually being passed forward by hand by the worshippers to the chancel where the priests officiated in their robes. A man or woman in the congregation would tap the shoulders of the person in

TROIKAS, OR THREE-HORSED CARTS

front with the taper and it was at once passed on. The crowd gave one the impression of great devotion and earnestness.

On Sunday afternoon we also visited the Natural History Museum at the quay on the Vassili Ostrov, one of the islands overlooking the Neva.

This museum contained a very fine collection. The glass cases illustrating protective colouring in animals and birds were excellent, and so were the cases of water-birds, with water represented by transparent glass, there being dry weeds and beaches of dry pebbles above the glass surface, and brown varnished pebbles to imitate wet ones below. These were beautifully realistic.

There seemed to be more and larger cases of this kind than we have in South Kensington, but the African antelopes were less numerous than ours. The specimens seemed to have more room in the building than ours, and what they had was therefore shown to better advantage. On the whole, the collection did not seem anything like so large as our own.

On the river, and on the extensive system of canals in Petersburg, there are summer services of small passenger steamers like those of the Seine at Paris, and there is the same sunlight and a Venetian brightness of colour about the houses overlooking the water.

While we were in Petersburg there were illuminations which reminded me of a Raja's garden party—thousands of little lamps. I often found myself looking at something which reminded me of the East; the high wooden hoop over the horses' heads, for instance, recalled the form of draught of the ekkas in Bengal,

where the horse pushes as much as he pulls, with shafts rising at a steep angle.

This is a crisp, bright city, full of life and colour and great spaces. It is up-to-date and cosmopolitan in everything except in the street pavings, which, save where longitudinal strips of asphalte have been introduced, are an uneven waste of rugged cobble-stones, more like the moraine of a glacier than our western idea of a twentieth-century street. This kind of surface, I am told, is necessary, from the fact that during five long months or so, the snow, over which the sleighs are driven, lies half a yard deep on the street. It is almost impossible to speak for the roar, when either walking or driving.

The droshkies plying for hire are good and well horsed; and this is one of the cheapest things in Russia. You can take a good long drive for five-pence or tenpence. There are some picturesque drives round the islands in the long June evenings, when the sun sets late. It sets, moreover, for only a very short time.

If the new-comer were to judge by the appearance of the streets from a distance, he would call the life there a gay scene; but the faces of the people convey an idea of sadness or stolidity; you seldom see people laughing heartily, as do even our own poor. The

faces of the ladies and children struck me as pale, like those of our English ladies and children when kept too long in the plains of India; perhaps for the same reason—too much shutting up of houses.

The Russians shut out the cold as we shut out the heat; and they carry their winter habit through the short summer. Whenever you see a man in a hotel or railway carriage opening a window, ten to one it is an Anglo-Saxon.

Fair hair seems almost universal among the peasant children; sometimes it is so devoid of colour as to be nearly white; often it is attractive, but one misses the fine deep red complexion of the Swiss or English country children.

The Russian peasants and the peasant settlers in Siberia have very large families, the members of which are mostly much alike, well formed and strong in spite of their want of colour. The children are there, in undeniable numbers, playing about at every railway station; and it argues well for the future of this country of great distances and undeveloped territories.

CHAPTER III

MOSCOW

WE boarded the express train for Moscow on the evening of the 11th June. The train service, both here and further east, has been well described in recent accounts of travel. Everything was as smart and up-to-date as it could possibly be. The carriages were on the corridor system, with lavatories, electric light and bells, a smoking and dining saloon. It seemed more modern than the mail train to Brindisi, which, however, I have not tried for some six or seven years.

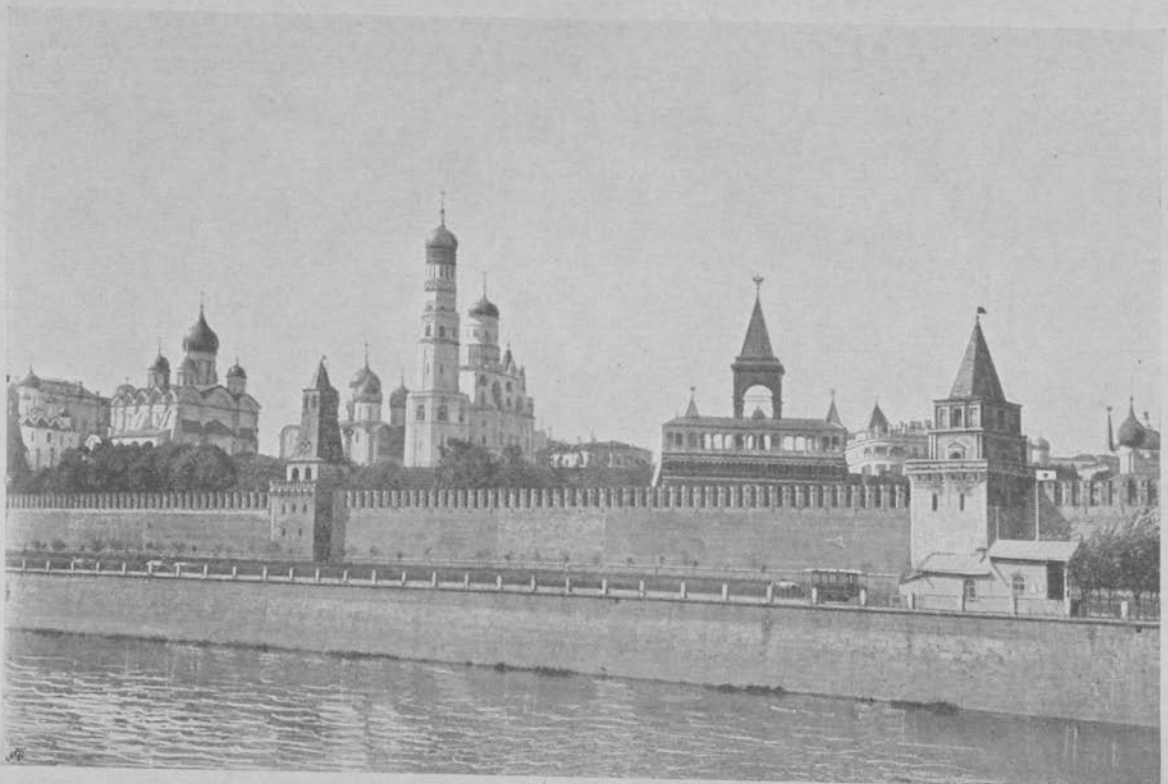
The late setting and early rising of the sun enabled us to see much of the country on this night journey through a land quite strange to us. Looking out of the corridor windows, the general face of the country at the track side was not unlike our old familiar Indian landscape—a level land of scrubby tree-growth and here and there open cultivated spaces. It was like the Central Provinces after the rains. Near the line there were the same "borrow-pits" full of water; the same general absence of fences, except the posts

and rails along the railway boundary, where are also scrubby bushes and young saplings.

The birch as seen from a distance, though the leaf, of course, is quite small, grows not unlike the scrubby teaks and other trees in the Central Provinces forests; there are the same light yellowish greens; and at the time of my return, three months later, the dead leaves were dull yellow like the dead teak leaves, the birch forests at this later time being dashed with brown and yellow autumnal tints.

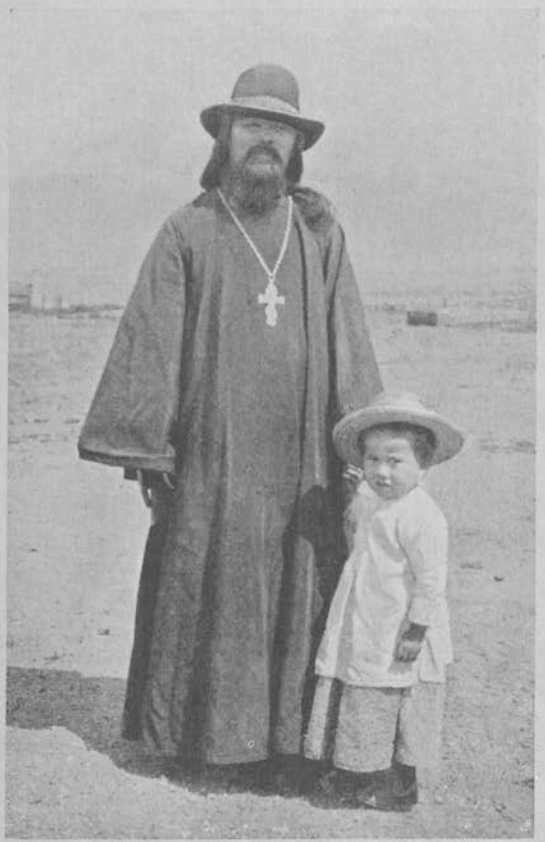
In the early morning, damp mists lay over stunted forest and meadow and hamlet just as they do in India.

At half-past nine on 12th June, we ran into the station at Moscow; and sending our luggage by omnibus, were soon walking to the Hôtel de Berlin with the interpreter who came to meet us. We noticed at once the same rugged cobble-stones we had encountered at Petersburg; but they were far worse. Moscow at once strikes one as old-fashioned. There are narrow streets, and it is totally unlike Petersburg. It is more beautiful, for it has more oriental colouring, and it possesses the peerless Kremlin, round which the best part of the town and the good shops are concentrated. The shops being all together and the streets narrower, the distances are much less than at



THE KREMLIN WALL FROM ACROSS THE RIVER

Petersburg, and one's shopping can be done within a walk. Especially interesting is the New Bazaar,



THE PRIEST AT KOSH-AGATCH

containing an arcade of good shops under a high glass roof; it must be a favourite promenade in the winter. It was here we bought Russian lace,

embroideries, and the handsome blue and gold inlaid spoons. The bronzes are very dear and very tempting, especially some work which my guide told me was the work of a Russian artist now dead. There was a beautifully executed figure of a Cossack lying down, firing over the body of his horse; and another of a troika sleigh, three horses galloping wildly with a man holding a woman steady in the sleigh, the hand clutching the side of the sleigh.

The action in the piece is eloquent of high speed and makes one want to be driving furiously too.

But the massive Kremlin sacred gate and enclosure wall, squarely built, deeply crenellated, and towered at intervals, appealed to me as much as anything in Moscow. There was something Mongolian in its character; perhaps it was because I remembered the general trace and idea of the Mandalay wall. The absolute difference in material does not matter, and the resemblance is hard to explain. There was something fine and bold in its architecture, and the rich tertiary green of the copper-roofed towers appealed very strongly to the artistic sense. It seemed to belong to a different age and nation from the many buildings standing inside.

My eyes and imagination were so occupied with this wall that I would not listen to the guide; but I

have a sort of recollection that he said the Russians built it after a Tartar design. At any rate, to my

BELL TOWER IN THE KREMLIN

fancy, the hand of the Far East is in it, and I did not care about statistics.

We saw the Kremlin and all its buildings from

inside and outside ; and took an evening walk to get a view of it from across the river, reflected in the water.

We were led a climb up a very high tower, with large and deep-sounding bells on several floors. There was a colossal bell below, as big as the giant Burmese specimens, with a piece broken out of the side ; but the guide said it was only made for show. He told us of a bell which fell, or broke, but we were looking at the copper-greens of the roofs and missed the point of the story. The Empress Katharine seems to be remembered in Moscow as Peter the Great is in Petersburg, and the guide showed us very large guns and very large bells cast under her orders. Later, at Nijni Novgorod Fair, a most interesting foundry, or at any rate a dock, near the river was shown me, where large church-bells, newly made, were being exhibited.

The artistic work on these bells appeared to me beautiful in design and execution. If one remembers Burma, it looks as if this taste in Russia for great bells has an Asiatic origin.

Once at the top of the tower, we could see the whole great city of copper-greens and reds and browns and bright gold on hundreds of minarets and cupolas, spread densely round us under the most brilliant of blue skies. There was a beautiful taj-like structure

without minarets standing out overlooking the river a short distance to the west.

The river passed close below the foot of the massive Kremlin enclosure walls; and in the distance also to

THE KREMLIN FROM THE RIVER

the west could be seen a long, low ridge covered with dark woods, from which, our guide told us, Napoleon first saw Moscow.

They show you a lot of things connected with Napoleon; and what seemed to me if anything more

impressive than the Kremlin wall was the long row of guns taken from Napoleon (600 my guide said, counting those outside and inside the Kremlin itself). These were field-guns, siege-guns, mortars, and howitzers, or at any rate short guns for high-angle fire.

To anyone who has been taught military arithmetic and knows what forces in horse, foot, artillery, and wheeled transport are represented by a given number of guns, the sight of this terrible wreck, in concrete and tangible form, of La Grande Armée comes quite as a revelation. One sees a percentage of hits bitten deep into the metal of many of the muzzles, and one realises not only the waste of metal, but the other materials that were wasted: the leather, the flesh and blood, and also the amount of death and suffering that must have been endured before these guns, the flower of the artillery of Europe, collected by Napoleon from all the continental nations, were given up. One pictures in the mind's eye the vast wheeled transport, military and civilian, from every country, and thus realises the extraordinary power of the man who could collect it all, and the nature of the international service done by these patriotic Russians in checking him at the zenith of his career.

Englishmen are apt to say that "Jack Frost"

wrecked Napoleon; but if you are standing in the Kremlin with the guns before you, you see that we have very much to admire, and to imitate if we can, in the wonderful preparedness and singleness of purpose, the foreknowledge and grasp of higher strategy in taking advantage of the natural conditions and seasons, displayed by the Russians. And if you see these guns you understand how bravely their troops must have fought. You begin to see the stubbornness which later in their history made the losses at Plevna possible.

CHAPTER IV

TO SIBERIA

WE drove up to the fine structure of white masonry, with a large open space in front, which is the Moscow terminus of the Siberian Railway, on the evening of June 11th.

Seton Karr and I were now to be travelling companions. My wife had returned to Petersburg, as previously arranged, by a train which left Moscow an hour before our own, so that we were able to give her some help in starting.

I had been at some pains to ascertain the date of the departure of our train, which was the Grand International, at the sleeping-car office in Cockspur Street, before leaving London. When once in Russia it is difficult to find out from the railway authorities whether you are going by the Russian train or by the International. There does not seem to be any difference now, as the Russian trains are said to have much improved, and the attendance on both is good.

The only advantage of going first-class was that by paying three pounds for an extra berth I got a two-

berthed cabin to myself, and was able to find room for more small baggage, and the saving in registration recouped me. You cannot do this in the second-class.

But for this, it would be quite possible to take less baggage and to go second. The first and second-class passengers have equally the use of the smoking and dining saloons, and mix there; and I did not hear that the second-class passengers were at all uncomfortable.

The speed has probably much increased since Mr. Fraser wrote *The Real Siberia*. In fact, the whole journey to the Ob in Mid-Siberia, so far as concerned the railway, seemed to be a very ordinary one. There were good long stoppages at the stations, which enabled us to get some exercise by strolling up and down the platform.

There is always plenty of life and interest at these stations in summer. They are well laid out and clean. As in India, in the evenings, on Sunday especially I think, the families of the minor railway officials and peasant settlers dress up in their best and come down to promenade the platform and see the Siberian train arrive and go.

In the station yards and green meadows round are cows, geese, turkeys, and farmyard noises; and crowds of fair-haired children come to the carriages with bare

feet, bringing melons and fruit, eggs and bottles of milk, and large bunches of wild flowers for sale. A few police and station officials strut about in uniforms and swords.

The Russians seem kind to their children, and allow them to participate freely in this pleasure of lounging about on the platform. There are swings in the station fields for the children, who play about the line, and sell flowers to passengers, and seem to do what they like.

The passengers included an Englishman who had been making an experimental trip, going back to Shanghai after a short holiday in England, and with him we foregathered. All the passengers, many of whom are ladies, take part in the promenade on the platform at the stopping places, the bargaining with the peasants' children, and watch the queer Tartars and Kirghiz who are to be seen at some of the stations.

We saw three distinctly pretty Kirghiz women, evidently well-to-do, at one station, dressed in furs and silks, laughing and posing in a group before a Russian amateur photographer.

But the effect was utterly spoilt by three smart Parisian parasols.

Down either side of the dining-saloon are rows of little tables, which are continued through into the

smoking-room ; and most of these tables are occupied by people playing cards, or eternally sipping glasses of

RUSSIAN SETTLERS AT KOSH-AGATCH

Russian tea flavoured with sugar and lemon, which is very good.

It is not necessary to take private supplies of tea, or any food, on to these trains. There are coffee and

rolls and butter in the early morning, lunch at about one, and dinner at about six; and glasses of tea, or what you like, at any time. The charges seem reasonable, and the food is very good.

It was difficult in these civilised surroundings to realise that one was in the centre of Asia.

The view from the saloon windows may be considered monotonous by some people, but to those who admire trees and wide spaces of country, there is a certain charm in it all.

On the first day out from Moscow we passed forests of stately green birch trees, with stems a brilliant mottled white and grey; green grass glades with purple wild flowers; open ground with masses of yellow and white flowers; and towards evening we entered mixed forests of birch and fir. Later there were clumps all fir, and then a continuous forest of conifers.

At six o'clock next morning I opened the blind and saw a wide golden prairie with the sun, already over two hours high, blazing across it into the carriage. Framed in the cheerful picture was a large drove of horses trekking, in the charge of mounted drovers, and a small town with golden cupolas, standing like an island in a dip in the plain; then large herds of cattle and ponies. This was before we reached Samara. Six hours after leaving that place we were in rolling prairie

rising to low hills two or three miles away, showing light red where the soil and rocks had been exposed, and light green everywhere else, except where beautiful wreaths of violet, exquisite in colour, swept across the valley sides like veils of mist. The nearer foreground showed these to be the effect of a meadow flower springing up in the fields in dashes of deep rose or crimson lake.

One passenger, who knew, thought this like the American prairies, the distances were so great. Shallow natural nullahs cut the ground everywhere, as in India. Much of it looked like India in the rains. Some of the churches and public buildings are taj-like, with small bubble cupolas, heavily gilt.

Some thin spires, also gilt, have something in their design which reminds one of the Burmese Pungi-Kioungs; no doubt various Mussulman and Mongolian forms being represented in Russian architecture. There were no spires to be seen like those of France and England.

Some of the villages in these open downs have a temporary look, like the Indian famine camps which some of us know so well. There are the same wooden walls and thatched roofs, the same long, yellow-grey clusters of houses on valley sides, with

here and there a "pucca" frame roof, painted a quiet red or green.

For twenty, or even, perhaps, fifty miles, one could see fold beyond fold of ground, the nearest bright green or gay with veldt flowers, the furthest distance shading into dim blue-grey. Not a tree was in sight, save where, near the horizon, an indigo line spread itself out into the sea of grass, marking some forest of birch or dark fir which encroached on the plain. We had a bright Indian sun overhead.

There were crows upon every paling, very like our Indian crows. The dogs one saw about the stations were something like collies, well cared for and very intelligent; and though fierce-looking, there was always the friendly movement of the last three inches of the tail.

At two p.m. on the 12th there was open steppe, and a drove of two hundred half-wild ponies appeared, trotting along the sky-line of a hill, chasing, biting, and kicking one another, the fringes of the mob galloping, and being rounded up by mounted men.

A few miles further there was a town of some five hundred log-huts and a church, a dozen better buildings, and many spacious stockyards.

Everywhere, travelling on mere cart-tracks (the only roads), was to be seen the light one-horse telega,

or country cart, made of wooden staves and shaped like a punt or a strawberry basket. It rests, without regular springs, on a long, rectangular framework, supported by four low, strong wheels, which are wide apart, the front wheels being the lowest. The shafts, being attached low down, rise to the horse's shoulders at an angle, and are connected over his head by the

TWO RUSSIAN SETTLERS

high arch of the "dougah." These carts will stand anything, and are perfectly adapted to their purpose. We went many hundreds of miles with our baggage in them and never had the slightest breakdown.

Before sunset on the 13th the train stopped at a little prairie station, where we saw many Tartar types mixed up with Russian ones. Always there were thousands of ponies on the plain.

The peasants' dress gave a general impression of

red and black; women had red hoods over the head, and a sort of blouse, a coloured apron, and a black gown. We saw them weeding with large wooden spades and high baskets.

Many peasants seemed to find it more comfortable to wear their red or white shirts with the tails streaming in the wind, after the manner of the Anglicised Aryan, which we took as a sign that we were going east. The black leather knee-boot, well wrinkled above the ankles, the canvas-like bandage and grass shoe, or the felt snow-boot, worn even in summer, were the prevailing foot-gear of the Russian or Russianised Tartar peasants. A large number wore fur caps, even in summer. There are several kinds of Asiatics in the Russian Empire; one chiefly hears of Tartars, Kirghiz, Kalmuks, and Mongols; but our future journey away from the railway was to be chiefly concerned with the last three. The word Tartar seems to cover a good deal; we saw a circle of men, cooking on the ground, looking and dressed for all the world like Punjabi Mohammedans, who were described as Tartars.

As night fell on the 13th we entered foot-hills and forest, the beginning of the rise over the Ural Mountains, on the further side of which was Siberia. So far we had beer in Russia itself.

Here we stopped at a station, alongside another Siberian train running west. There were two or three English and some Americans. We exchanged visits and compared trains. Theirs was a Russian train and ours an international one. Ours seemed slightly the better of the two.

As the sun rose on 14th June we were still in the Ural Mountains, and still imperceptibly climbing in grand forest. There were, so far as one could judge, spruce firs, birch, a fine, ornamental kind of cedar, Norway pine, and a tree looking like the Himalayan deodar, all stately in growth and casting long, early morning shadows on the green glades of short alpine grass. In suitable spots there were also poplars, alder bushes, and aspens. Butterflies seemed plentiful.

All the country was wild save that at long intervals were frame villages of about thirty huts. These were large châlet-like structures built of sawn planks. We passed some small lakes flanked by forest-covered ridges and having here and there villages built on their margins. My travelling companion said it was all very like Norway.

We reached Chelyabinsk on the 14th, an important railway station judging by the number of people, mostly Russians and well dressed, who crowded on to the platform. There is the usual country town

behind the station, and the usual mixture of Russian and Asiatic races.

On the Siberian side, that is, east of Chelyabinsk, the country is one great plain, cultivation, pasture, and dense birch forest about fifty feet high alternating in patches. It looked to me very like the Central Provinces of India (say east of Jubbulpur) after the rains, especially in the uncertain evening light, when we had the sun shining low astern of the train.

The birch grows with feathery tops, looking like the long rows of Indian bamboo clumps; colours are much the same, and the resemblance is heightened by the flat green fields and the railway "borrow-pits" in the foreground. It was also, in the evening light and cool air, not unlike a railway journey across the country we had so lately left—England. The black soil looked rich; it was evidently a country capable of paying its way. It was difficult to believe that one was in Asia, the train slid so smoothly between green cultivated country, the deep English blue-green which is quite unlike the French green, and always the feathery birch clumps in silhouette against the sky. One felt oneself to be in as comfortable and civilised surroundings as if merely crossing the south of England. The country was tame, homely, and familiar-looking. The snow, it is said, lies five or six months

of the year here. Yet the land supports plenty of life, bright young life—for there are lots of children about—and the people look far happier, though under an Imperial form of government, than some English

A TYPICAL RUSSIAN SETTLER'S HOUSE, AND KALMUK DRIVER

one can name, who can have no work to do and patrol the streets of London with collecting-boxes.

Many of the women and children go barefoot in the hot summer weather, but in winter their log-houses, well built and stuffed between the perfectly jointed logs with dried moss or felt, are warm; the windows provided with good shutters; and a heater

for the principal rooms. Fuel is cheap, growing in quantities round the settlements. There are stuff settees to sleep upon, and coarse carpets, like our Indian durrees, on the floor.

The summer, when it comes, does so with a rush. During the last day or two we had had it about eighty-two degrees in the shade, and I wore my Indian clothes.

During the night, which we had spent on the slopes of the Urals, it had been cooler; it was, indeed, a perfect climate, not colder than midsummer nights in England. I slept with one blanket and the window wide open.

The peasant population at the stations seemed strong and contented; there were healthy women and fine, upright, broad-shouldered men, tanned by the sun, and their appearance upset much that I had heard of the Russian peasant. Many, I believe, of the emigrants who are unfit return to Russia, but those who stay on in Siberia seem to go some rungs up the social ladder. In the course of my subsequent cart journey I had a good deal to do with the slow-moving, slow-thinking Russian peasant, and formed the opinion that he is a man with an intelligence which requires development, but with considerable latent force of character. No one will question his physique.

On 15th June at eight a.m. we were in another scene —open prairie again, very flat, a sea of short grass. This was the first cloudy morning, quite an English sky. On the previous night mosquitoes had been bad for the first time.

We stopped at Tomsk, the well-known Siberian town, which is of considerable size, and stands on the borders of a small lake. It is not very near the line, and the distant view was not at all impressive.

Then we went on through the same kind of country, indeed, it continued right through to Ob station, where we were to leave the railway for our journey south.

Throughout Siberia so far as we had gone, from the Urals to the Ob, we had seen, if we omit the tree clumps, one unbroken stretch of green turf and cultivation over a rich black soil, just like any English fields, and quite different from what I had expected.

In Siberia the birch had been practically the only kind of tree; it is very hardy, and will stand very great cold. In Kashmir straggling specimens live at the top of the timber-line, well above the pines.

If I have given too radiant a picture of a land which is under snow for so many months in the year, perhaps it is partly because I only saw it in summer, and partly through having spent so much of my service in sun-scorched regions, that the calm and

homeliness of Siberia appealed to me; an Englishman who had stayed at home always might not notice so much resemblance.

The feeling is strongest as you slide through the gloaming, when there is a cloudy sky. The cows go deep in rich grass, leaving their footprints in soft, black earth. Cart-tracks deep in mud cross weedy brooks.

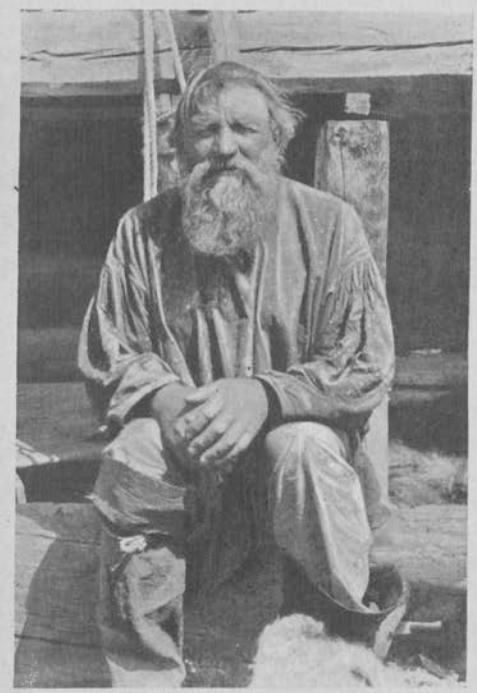
In a field at the back of one station yard we saw the ladies of a family, probably of a well-to-do farmer, walking out in their best clothes in the evening, parasols in hand, to look at the farm stock, just as they might do in an English village. This was hundreds of miles from Russia proper.

At the stations are great piles of firewood, and also of sleepers. I am told they burn wood, coal, and oil respectively on various sections of the line. Not till the last day of the rail journey did we get rain—an English drizzle only—as we were passing over fields of rich soil with grain waving in the wind.

Of the agricultural machines we saw being used, both here and on the route to Mongolia, I am informed that none were of British manufacture. They were American mowers, reapers, binders, and rakes. Steam is not used, but horse traction, which is cheap, a horse costing from £4 to £5. I am told a great

need of the agricultural districts is a cheap threshing machine.

The effect upon the Russians of all this settling-up of Siberia will be a stimulating one, just as our colonies



RUSSIAN SETTLER

have stimulated us. These people are fighting the good fight with nature, instead of idling in the towns of their mother-country complaining that they are being beaten by nature.

Russia plunged into the business of this Siberian Railway in no half-hearted fashion; she will reap the benefit a hundredfold one day, and she deserves all the luck she can get from it. It is, like the Suez Canal, constructed by a nation capable of carrying out big ideas for the credit of the flag without looking too much to immediate profit, and it is a service to civilisation.

When one comes fresh from our big cities one realises how much better off these people are; one sees throughout this wide country people who are all fighting in the same way, with their brains and hands, against what was lately virgin soil; and one realises what a sound paying investment this must be, for if it were not, all these families would be starving; and anyone who travels in Southern Siberia can see with half an eye that they are doing nothing of the kind.

Here in Siberia one realises better what must be the value of the "landless man to manless land" work which has been begun by the Salvationists in America, and of the "back to the land" agitation in England; and one welcomes any policy (even if it contemplates taxed food) which holds out a fair promise of starting a centrifugal movement from the towns, and which can send the best people, not only "back to the land"

in England, but also out to the colonial lands of the British Empire.

These Russian peasant settlers are going to be a great people some day. It is a country of spaces and elbow-room, cultivatable, and having pasture for

RUSSIAN CHILDREN AT KOSH-AGATCH

millions of horses and cattle. The Russian settlers who stay in Siberia do not look unintelligent. What they seem to lack may be cured later on in their children by competition, for though hard-working in certain ways, they are dilatory and unbusinesslike, and have not the slightest conception of the value

of time as Englishmen, Frenchmen, or Germans know it.

This will all correct itself as Central Asia fills up with white men. Anyone who looks at the crowds of children, not only along the length of the railway, but across from there down to the Altai and in a few outlying settlements near the Mongolian frontier, can see that Russia will in the future hold all the main part of continental Asia with a much firmer grip than she does now.

It is not of the slightest use for other countries to try and resist this slow but sure development in the appointed latitudes; but as you go south anywhere in Asia, you must come to a zone where facilities of communication from the sea will be greater than those from the north; and India, Burma, and the southern parts of China are within the sphere of the Powers which hold the sea, quite irrespective of any question of race. If the Spaniards held Siberia and Turkestan, and the French held India, there would be the same political question.

It is my belief that when steam came to the aid of sea power, the fate of India was settled for good. In old days India was repeatedly conquered by Powers whose influence advanced overland from the north. Those were times when expeditions through mountain

passes were easy. The "sniper" could not have flourished to the extent to which he does now; he would have had to come down into the valley and use close-quarter weapons. India had no reinforcements to look to from the sea.

Invasions and advances of spheres of influence in the future will be an affair of railways. The Indian frontier railway system is nearly complete, and cannot go much further. Russia has most of hers to make, and that means the necessity of quiet, peaceful development, not only of railways, but of populations along them.

There is also an element of continued peace in the long time it will take for Russia to finish the great work she is now doing in the whole northern area. She is not ready to dispute spheres with the sea yet; and, as time goes on, every improvement in arms makes frontiers, all the world over, more defensible, and throws India more absolutely into the maritime sphere. Every addition to the size and number of engines of destruction makes the transport question more difficult; and invasion of another country nowadays, except by rail, is almost doomed to failure. The more bulky the transport necessary in war becomes, the more defensible value we shall get out of our arid Indian frontier.

Yet Russia is so single of purpose, appears so free from party politics, so enterprising and persistent in Asia, that in the distant future a time may come when she may wish to practically test the question in Middle Asia, as she is already doing in the Far East, of how far the sea sphere extends inland.

And the more distant that time may be, the more powerful will Russia certainly become. If she can then gain advantages over us, it will be to her honour; and no one will pity us, for anyone who takes the trouble to think at all can see an improved Russia in the future. The men who hold those agricultural spaces will advance, whatever the form of government.

This rivalry between the continent and the sea, being purely geographical, need not stand in the way of esteem between two peoples. The British and Russians should have much in common, for they are both busily colonising.

But under-estimating our rival in Asia would only lead to trouble, the sure way to peace being a sturdy foresight, a fixed policy, and an appreciative knowledge of our neighbour's strength. So much trouble has always come, in history, to those nations which have under-estimated their rivals.

Her strength, at any rate her coming strength, is

plain to the eye. It lies in the great spaces and agricultural population not crystallised into cities, and having the wheat growing about them; a good birth-rate and that religious unity which has always in history been such a valuable asset to commanders of all creeds; and now that soldiers have to be mobile,

KALMUK PONIES

cheap horses. There are good horses and ponies everywhere in Russia. In Siberia we never saw anyone making a journey on foot; even the women and children ride, when they go short distances.

An instructive article in the *Daily Telegraph* last December, by a well-informed writer, said that Russia keeps a war-chest of a hundred millions sterling in

gold, and that it is constantly augmenting; also, that with a total land force whose only rival is that of Germany, she can put 200,000 mounted infantry into the field; for alone of all the Powers of Europe, the Russians have recognised the great utility of mounted infantry.

CHAPTER V

ON THE OBI RIVER

ON 16th June, after passing over the famous iron bridge, we arrived at Ob station and the town of Novo-Nicholaewsk, our point of departure for the Altai district. Here we found Mr. Cattley and his sons waiting for us, and we were soon walking over to his house and accepting his hospitality.

It was almost impossible to find out at what time the steamer *Rossia*, which was to take us up the Obi River, would arrive at Novo-Nicholaewsk. Indeed, the traveller in Siberia is at once struck by the difficulty experienced in getting any accurate information.

Another difficult thing is to get the ordinary Russian or Siberian to hurry. If you press him too much, you run the risk of giving offence.

If you ask for information, you nearly always receive the reply "ne znaiyu" (I don't know), or if you ask when anything will be ready, it is "sichass" (directly).

Another trait and I have done. You arrange, the night before a journey, with a driver, for horses and

carts at dawn, giving most careful instructions; and next morning at the appointed time he comes to you for fresh orders, and you find he has sent his horses out to graze and can let you have them with difficulty by noon. He really brings them by two o'clock; or, if it is later, he says he cannot start till next morning, as the road is difficult, etc. How familiar this sort of thing is to Anglo-Indians! I used to think the Hindu dilatory, now I no longer think him so bad.

Novo-Nicholaewsk can be described in a few words. It is a "mushroom" town of sawn planks and logs, with open spaces about a hundred feet wide, grey alluvial clay taking the place of roads. Standing, as it does, within a short walk of Ob station on the railway, and of the banks of the Obi, one of the finest waterways in Asia, it has a great future before it. Already fortunes have been made. There are not many murders; it is, I believe, far behind Tomsk and Irkutsk in this respect, and a very few years will see it a thoroughly up-to-date town. Eight years ago, it is said, one could have bought the land on which the town stands for a few roubles.

A specific instance of its mushroom growth will be worth quoting. There is a man in Novo-Nicholaewsk who pays the Government a rouble per year rent for his ground, measuring about an acre; and he lets

quite a small piece of it, about a tenth, for seventy-five roubles a year.

Novo-Nicholaewsk, in common with other places on the line, exports Siberian butter to Denmark and to England.

At last, on the evening of June 18th, our steamer

FIREWOOD STATION ON THE BANKS OF THE OBI

arrived, and we (Seton Karr, the two Cattleys, and I) walked for a mile along dusty paths, through scrub forest, to the landing-stage, which is near the famous railway bridge over the Obi. We then went on board and took possession of two cabins.

There was a small dining-saloon, where excellent meals were to be had; but it was hot and close,

because, in accordance with the usual custom, all the windows were kept closed.

Whenever it was empty I used to quietly air it by opening them.

I cannot understand the Russians of the lower middle class in this respect. The peasants seem hardy enough; but the small tradesmen and petty officials, the sort of travellers one meets, keep rooms shut up even in summer; and when starting on a drive in the morning at a post-house, they stand in the yard shivering, muffled up in neckcloths and with thick overcoats on, when an ordinary Englishman feels comfortable in a tweed suit, and would not dream of an overcoat. We have such a variable climate in England that we do not think it worth while to trouble about the weather, except in our conversation. They seemed to think us eccentric for wishing to go shooting in the rain.

The lavatory arrangements on board were poor, even in the first-class. There was only a wretched contrivance for washing the hands, which must be seen to be appreciated; and the most charitable explanation that suggests itself is that in a very cold climate the water for washing has to be melted, and so a watch has to be kept on its consumption.

Our steamer was full of peasants passing between

small stations on the river, and small shopkeepers and minor officials going up to Barnaul or Bisk. All classes mixed upon the deck. Those who paid first and second got cabins.

The Russian peasant settlers of Siberia are very independent in their ways, and appear to be the most democratic, not to say casual, people in their manners to strangers. One word for a peasant, I believe, is Kristianin ; and certainly they keep up the equality of the early Christians. Before they have been introduced to you, they will handle your property in the most inquisitive way, and before they have been talking to you five minutes they will be asking you how much you paid for your clothes or your gun, where you have come from and where you are going to, what is your nationality and what are your plans. If you are sitting at meals in the saloon talking to your friends, they will idly stand about and watch you eating, will listen to the conversation and break into it just when they choose, without the slightest reason or apology for the intrusion. They will draw aside the curtain and peep into your cabin as they pass along the deck, from mere curiosity and not from any intention to offend. If you resented it they would be surprised. But on the whole they are a good-natured and orderly lot of people.

There is a good deal of hand-shaking in Russia. I saw a sailor, who was hauling at a rope, bow politely and shake hands with a comrade who had come to help him.

Some of the poorer peasants were heavy-featured men with a thick mop of hair chopped off at the back of the neck into the shape of half a mushroom, as if by the horizontal cut of an axe. They have light hair and fine blue eyes; there is plenty of bone and muscle about them; they are quiet-looking men and give way civilly as you pass. Some of the Russians are about the finest-looking white men I have seen.

In the third-class there were little framework bunks ranged catacomb-wise; all round the main deck, men and women sleeping in their clothes or partly so; the half-dressed, careworn-looking women of the poorer class were struggling with untidy bundles and with numerous children, trying to attend to all their wants. The men sleep in their coats and top-boots. Among the poorer classes I am describing, a shake, and the running through the hair of a comb drawn from the waistcoat pocket, seem the correct toilet; and you often see the humbler Russians using the comb as they enter a room.

The Russians seem to be even more restless a people than the Anglo-Saxons; you see them walking

about indoors, in rooms, passages, corridors of trains, and steamers; doing nothing, but ready to take part in anything that is of the slightest interest.

Before going further, it should be explained that there is no attempt to describe Russian society, of which I saw very little; I took no private introductions into Russia or Siberia except one to my English friends, because such introductions, however pleasant, would have been a hindrance, obliging unnecessary halts by the way; so that nearly all my experience of Russians, except at Bisk and Novo-Nicholaewsk, was among the peasant class in public conveyances and post-houses.

Getting up early on 19th June we were given some good coffee and rolls in the little saloon; and then, anxious to see the Obi River, I went out into the bows.

There was a fine volume of water with a good current, and I realised that we were on one of the great waterways of the world.

The engines of our boat were forcing us south against the whole will of the river, which comes down full at this season from the Altai highlands, the Southern Siberian Switzerland. The brown muddy water, fat with alluvial soil, flows with determination, a swift, smooth sheet, reflecting the sky like polished

copper. The river appeared to be the embodiment of silent power, as if it meant to sweep our shell of a steamer a few thousand miles down to the north; it seemed to be opposing our journey to our wished-for goal.

On either side are wide green cultivated pastures, rising to distant low hills; and these pastures are dotted over with herds of cows, sheep, and horses.

A town to the left, all brown chalets, with picturesque pent roofs, lying at a flat angle, with deep eaves, appeared on the eastern shore, overlooking a steep scarp scoured out by the current at a curve; an island, covered with low forest, lay in front of us; and in the far blue-grey distance upstream a long line of higher forest seemed to bar our path, where the river made a bend.

The air was pure and exhilarating, an air of English summer, not cold, but just cool enough; and the vivid green, short-grassed prairie, showing infinite spaces on either side, was so evidently left to nature that one had in its appearance a guarantee of pure air.

We had at this time a cloudy English sky and a smart shower of rain.

There are piles of firewood seven feet high at the landing-stages, made of logs like half-round sleepers, stacked in thousands.

We stopped at Ardenski to take in firewood, and the people left the ship for half an hour's stroll on the shore. It was exactly like a bit of English river scenery. Willows overhung the water's edge; the bright green meadows were flat and marshy; there were cows and a big barn in the foreground; and dark woods filled in the distance. It was hot English summer weather, by noon, indeed, almost uncomfortably hot; and I made myself conspicuous among the Russians, who wore fur caps and felt hats, by walking about in a Cawnpore pith hat, a kind which they had never seen before. If you are an Anglo-Indian, and have learnt to respect the sun, take one; for you may get real Indian heat, Scotch mist, or snow at any time on the Mongolian frontier.

At 5.30 p.m. on this day, June 19th (which was the Russian June 6th), a mist of rain, with thunder and lightning, came down the river from the Altai and turned the marginal forests to a grey-green. The trees here were of medium height and left to grow wild, and looked very beautiful and park-like.

River scenery, when left to itself, is nearly always beautiful, whether you are here or in Burma, on the African Tana or the Indian Nerbudda; you get the same sort of views of sandy shoals, or scarped curves, and overhanging forest reflected in gleaming water.

Of its winter aspect, of the world of snow, I can say nothing; but I imagine the country would not lose in interest even then.

As we went to the bank about this time for wood, clouds of large mosquitoes charged on to the steamer and fastened on us all. We had to shut our cabin windows.

We passed timber rafts guided by four men each, drifting down the middle of the river, on their way to saw-mills at Novo-Nicholaewsk. They had been cut on the Obi banks higher up.

Bersk, which we had passed on the right bank, standing on an affluent of the Obi of the same name, is a great place for the collection of timber, which goes to the Imperial Cabinet saw-mills at Novo-Nicholaewsk.

These saw-mills are, I understand, the private property of the Czar.

On the night of 19th June I went on deck and found the river shining like a silver salver, with a yellow sky broken by very dark grey clouds. The olive-green forest lay behind; later, as it grew darker, a black line of bank and forest, with the moon shining over it, reflected in the water.

On June 20th the afternoon was spent by me on deck looking through my large telescope at horses

CROWD AT THE GANGWAY, OBI RIVER

grazing on the distant hills. There were white gulls on a low mud island filling up the foreground. The boat tied up at Barnaul at about midnight, and as our steamer for Bisk had not yet come, we went to bed.

On the 21st we got up at eight a.m. and shifted our baggage into the other steamer, now lying alongside ours; then the elder Cattley and I went into the town of Barnaul to call upon the officer of the Imperial Cabinet for the Altai district, which is the private property of the Czar. General Koublietsky Patookh, who filled this post, was not quite ready to see us when we arrived, and we were shown into a large reception-room, which must make an ideal ballroom. There was a row of drawing-room chairs drawn up along the wall, reflected in a well-polished parquet floor; and opposite, ranged in large pots near the windows, were magnificent palms and evergreens. On the walls were three full-length portraits of the present Czar and his two predecessors.

The General received us in his more comfortable study, where we showed him our intended route on the map. He gave us a note to an Ispravnik of police who was making the road up the Chuya River, now in course of construction.

After this visit we drove through the town and up to a hill, which we ascended by steps, where there

was a well-kept cemetery; and from here we were able to get a good view of Barnaul.

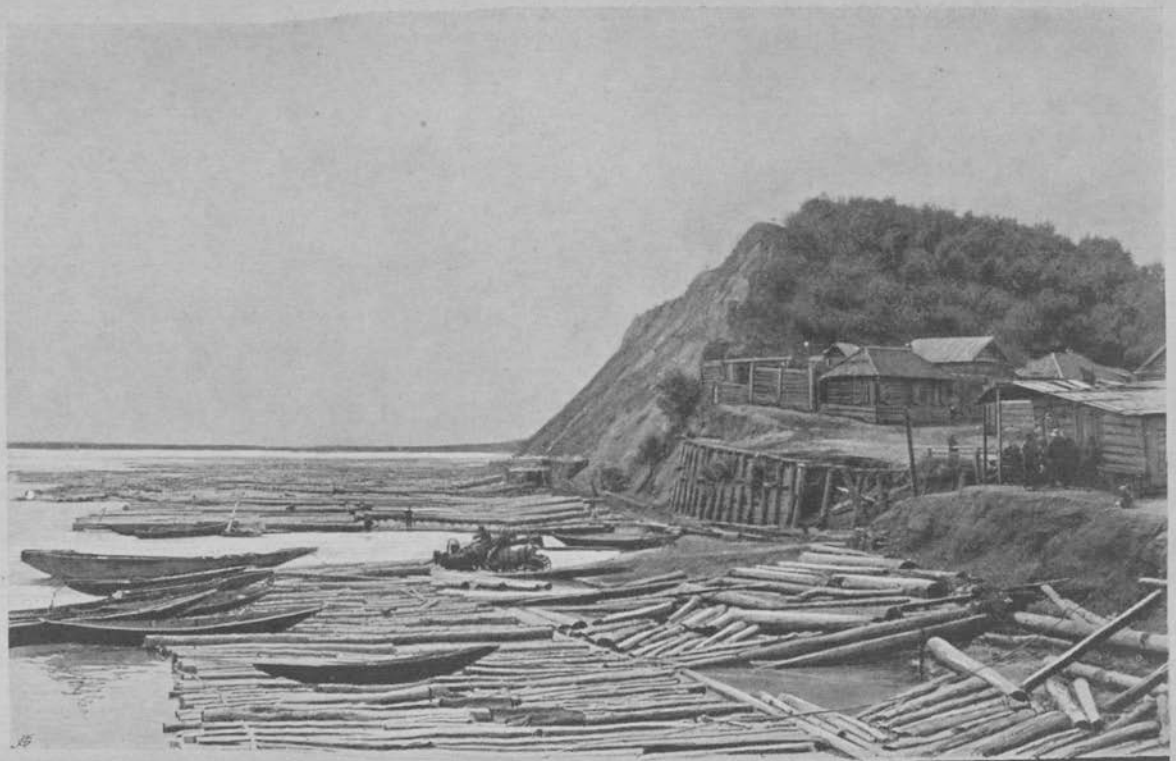
It is a very large town, well laid out, and already well established, with many shops, and will be a fine city some day. At present it smells of shavings in every street, and there are wooden side-walks, and it has all the appearance of a "boomed" town.

A funeral came up while we were on the hill, three women wailing loudly in front, followed by four men carrying a coffin-lid, then the bearers, and the corpse, carried waist-high by means of straps passed over their shoulders.

We came back to the boat, and pushed off from the wharf at two. It was a smaller steamer, and rather overcrowded.

We called at six p.m. at a little flooded island for wood. Floating on a pool were hundreds of small rafts of timber, just as they had been borne down by a stream, in round logs some ten feet long and a foot thick. The logs are detached singly from these rafts, run up on to the bank on skids, and sawn into yard lengths; then these lengths are split up longitudinally and stacked in the great stacks you see on the bank, measuring each some twenty yards square.

There were two men at a time carrying, on pairs of stretched poles, loads of this firewood on to the ship,



TIMBER RAFTS ON THE OBI RIVER

across a gangway, just as an ocean steamer takes in coals.

This was a very pretty spot. Wooded islands rose everywhere out of the river, which seemed high with snow-water; and there were pleasing distant views of forest through the water passages. A very tame wagtail, looking for shavings for its nest, ran about close to our feet.

As the sun set we were steaming ahead between wildernesses of low, forest-covered islands and glassy water lanes, with the pine-scented river air fanning our bows.

There is no pasture here—it is all low, flooded forest of green-grey, feathery, water-loving growths, rising to a uniform height of about twenty feet.

The trees here must live under curious natural conditions, getting a good deal of water in summer and snow in winter. We came to a long line of plateau, showing a surface of green, rolling pasture, under the precipitous earth sides of which the remains of snow-slips were still lying in the gullies. Though we were already in the Altai district there was no appearance of mountains yet. All the journey through Russia and Siberia, except where our train crossed the Urals, had been over flat country.

We were passing the plateau, with cliffs a hundred

feet high, scored by gullies, where the hummocks of snow, ten feet deep, still lay dark and dirty, and scarcely distinguishable from the dark colour of the gully sides, covered with dust round the edges, and mottled with dust on the surfaces, and fringed by naked earth, where the carpet of green grass had not yet grown up to replace the shrinking snow. We passed a wooden town, with ponies grazing over the emerald pasture round it, and in its outskirts were square stock-yards like those we had seen in Russia; and there was a church on a hill. In every gully overlooking the river, to within thirty feet of the water's edge, was a deep hummock of dirty snow, though we had had Indian heat all day, and the nights had brought only the English summer coolness. This shows what extremes of climate prevail here, and with what a rush the summer comes on.

The sun set at about nine p.m., the sky having grown an orange and rose, reflected in the dancing water; the plateau line became blacker and blacker; cattle were crawling along the skyline of the plateau, with the attendant upright figures of their cowherds – the prairie villages we had lately passed all had stock-yards, and cattle had been visible everywhere.

Between the clay cliffs of the plateau and the steamer there was a low marshy island, dotted with pollarded

water-loving, grey-leaved trees, with short, thick trunks like those on the banks of the Thames at Oxford.

On Monday, 22nd June, we were still making for Bisk, the river getting perceptibly narrower. There were some distant mountains visible on this morning, with snow on them. Everywhere were pastures and herds of ponies. It is said the Altai district contains some of the finest pastures in the world.

Soon after noon we were steaming between pines; not high, but pine forest everywhere; and distant blue mountains, snow-capped and snow-streaked, began to be plainly visible everywhere to the south.

At eight p.m. we reached Bisk, and getting our baggage into two peasants' carts, we walked beside them up a street with wooden side-walks and wooden houses smelling of shavings. We were comfortably installed in two rough double-storied inns built of logs. The one in which the elder Cattley and I took refuge was called the "Gastinitza Feodorova," the proprietor of which was a pleasant and civil man, who gave us his personal attention and put himself out for us a great deal. Moreover, he had a good back yard and lock-up store for baggage and hunting trophies. He told us Major Cumberland had put up here in days gone by.

Bisk, though in the heart of Asia, is as much Russian as a town in Russia proper, and except for the primitive roads, is quite civilised. There are several Russian merchants and well-to-do residents, a club, and more than one bank. There are some fine stone houses, notably the Russo-Chinese Bank. The chief trade is in Siberian butter.

Cattley took me in the evening to see the Bisk Club, where the band was playing in the club garden, and the bandmaster, a nice fellow, a major, and one of the most courteous of men, played "Home, Sweet Home" to us. We met with a good deal of kindness from private friends of Cattley's at Bisk.

I shall never forget the walk home from the club after dark, on a wet night, on the wooden side-walks of a modern Siberian "boom town." The planks were unlit, and scarcely distinguishable from the street, which was one deep, black quagmire with pools and holes full of water. There were hills and valleys and pot-holes of mud; while savage dogs barked furiously from the houses. We reached the little wooden hotel without mishap—ready for an early start next day.

ROYAL SOCIETY LIBRARY BOMBAY BRANCH

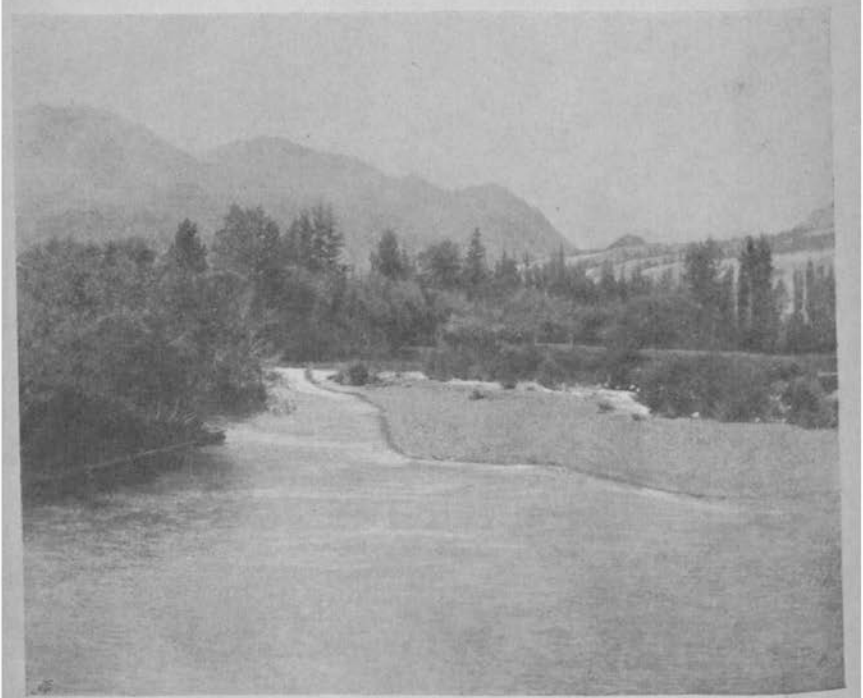
CHAPTER VI

THE ALTAI HIGHLANDS AND CHUISKY TRACT

IT was not till five p.m. on June 24th that we got off from Bisk in a large tarantass with three horses, and two telegas, or carts, with a pair each. The baggage goes in these wooden carts, but the usual conveyance for passengers is either a telyeshka or a tarantass. The former is made of strong, black wicker-work, and, like the telega, it has something the shape of a double-ended punt. It rests similarly on a framework with four small wheels wide apart. This basket carriage being open, is quite exposed to rain and splashing mud; also a seat has to be improvised of tents or pillows; so unless the weather is likely to be tolerably fine it is better to take a tarantass.

This is like the telyeshka, but there is generally a seat for two people to sit upon, and the wicker-work at the back is continued up over the seat to form a fixed hood. The whole basket is also, if I remember rightly, covered with thin black leather or oilcloth. In the superior kind of tarantass the hood is an ordinary carriage one, made to raise or lower.

Most tarantasses require a pair, or even three horses (called a troika). The centre horse is between the shafts and gallops under the "dougah" hoop con-



ON THE UPPER CHUYA

necting them, while the outside horses gallop simply attached by traces.

The simpler "telyeshka" form of carriage, having no seat, can be used for baggage.

After going at a gallop for twenty versts* through park-like forest alternating with cultivation, we reached the ferry over the Ob at six p.m., just too late to cross, as the raft was to be seen in midstream going away from us.

OUR TARANTASS, NEAR TENGINSKY LAKE

The scene here was lively, as there were many carts and tarantasses waiting to be taken over.

We sat on the sand and made tea, foregathering with a Russian traveller, the possessor of a samovar and of some German sentences.

* A verst is 1,167 yards, or about two-thirds of a mile.

The peasants were patiently making the best of it under their carts, like gypsies, the children running about with their white feet bare. We were told that such was the congested state of the country traffic, and slowness of this ferry, that fifty people and as many carts had been waiting here for three days.

The ferry never came back that night, though our Russian friend emptied his revolver into the air as a signal that we were getting impatient. It seems the custom to go "heeled" in parts of Siberia where there are long lonely night journeys, though the weapon is not obtrusively shown. Certainly we saw nothing to justify the practice on this journey; and I should say the ordinary peasants of the Altai, who are country people pure and simple, are a most respectable class, and there would be few, if any, criminals among them. In the mining districts it might be different.

We spent a most miserable night in the rain. There was no shelter except in the tarantass, which was too short to enable us to lie in it at full length. The tents were carefully roped up under waterproof covers in the carts, and it was too dark to look for tent-pegs and pitch them; besides, we expected to be taken over at any moment. Cattley managed to get a little sleep, but being taller and unable to fit into the tarantass, I

put on my waterproof and walked about on the sandy shore most of the night.

On 25th June we crossed, at six a.m. The reason given for the delay was that the boatman on duty had been drunk. The fair-haired giant who actually took

FERRY ON THE KATUN

us over, whom we called the "Viking," was certainly not drunk. The ferry was really a raft platform on two boats, and provided with paddles moved literally by horse-power.

There are four horses harnessed to the four poles of a horizontal capstan, which by a primitive arrangement

of cog-wheels drives the paddle. There is also a man with a steering-oar at the other end of the raft. It is very slow and terribly hard work for the ponies; a couple of men flick them continually with whips to make them go round. The circular track is necessarily a very small one, and consisting merely of old deck planks, it becomes as slippery as glass. The ponies cannot enjoy the labour, as they are almost skeletons, and their speaking eyes tell of the last stage of exhaustion. It is only on these pony-boats that I have seen ponies overworked or ill-used in Russia; for Russians seem generally kind to their animals.

As we neared the other side, we were working up against the current close inshore, the ponies being in the bows upstream, and the "Viking" with his big oar in the stern downstream. I was standing next him. Suddenly there was a shout, and the "Viking" threw himself flat on the dirty deck, and dangled his hands in the water in the well between the two pontoons. Half guessing what was up, I exactly imitated him, and threw myself flat, and a man drifted downstream into our arms. We grabbed him by his wet shirt and landed him like a fish on the deck. This was a man who had fallen in while whipping the ponies round.

We drove on from the ferry over country exactly

like the Central Provinces of India after the rains. The soil was what we in India call "black cotton" soil; and on the evening of 25th June we reached Altaiskoe, ninety versts from Bisk. There were picturesque chalets overlooking a street full of black liquid mud; in fact, I called it a "black mud Venice." There are a few shops. Altaiskoe is under snow in winter and mud in summer, and I should want a good deal of business to induce me to live there. It is a pity there is so much mud underfoot in the short summer, for when we were there we had a blue Indian sky, and the site of the town is within a most beautiful circle of pine-clad mountains, the beginning of the beautiful Altai highlands; the scenery of which Russians in Siberia, who know it, are never tired of extolling—and rightly so. This Switzerland in Asia will be better known as time goes on, and it deserves a far wider fame than it has yet attained.

The houses are built of logs with large eaved roofs —they looked exactly like the houses Anglo-Indians erect in Kashmir. We got fowls and eggs everywhere on this route, and in the morning we were roused by the cocks crowing in a very homely way. There is a good deal of cultivation, flax and hemp being grown in this part of the country. We put up in a peasant's house which acted as a staging-house.

On the 26th June we drove from Altaiskoe to Chergi, forty-five versts. The alpine scenery was very fine. We noticed many beautiful wild flowers, among them purple iris, buttercups, cowslips, several wild peas, a kind of orange marsh-marigold, and blue and white forget-me-nots in sheets. I should say here that my knowledge of botany is in no way equal to the task of scientifically describing what I saw. Professor Sapozhnikoff is a good authority on this subject. We had tea at Chergi and went on with fresh horses. Chergi is getting quite a fashionable stopping-place for the Altai. There was at least one respectable family staying here, and several travellers passing through.

From Chergi we drove on the same evening and through the night for another thirty-five versts to Shebalina, where we arrived at five a.m. on the 27th at the house of the merchant doing business in maral horns, who is mentioned by Demidoff. We stayed at his house all day, and in the afternoon we strolled out and saw him sawing off the horns of his tame stags, while still in the velvet. We also saw his deer park. We were disappointed about tarantasses that morning, but got away from Shebalina quite late in the evening of the 27th.

After dark, as we were galloping past a forest, we

TENGINSKY LAKE, FROM OUR HALTING-PLACE

heard wolves. We drove all night through mountains, and next morning found ourselves in beautiful scenery before Peschan. We were in pine-forest, with glorious wild flowers everywhere, but the road over cotton-soil was very muddy, and corduroyed by timber logs in places. It was very jolting work, and we were splashed and spattered when occasionally we plunged into deep mud-holes. We passed Peschan, thirty-five versts from Shebalina, and another ten versts brought us to the Tenginsky Lake.

As we entered the basin in which Tenginsky Lake lies we came on most remarkable scenery.

We had been driving uphill for some time through park-like glades carpeted with sheets of colour—blue forget-me-nots, and orange and lemon-coloured blossoms, three kinds of wild pansies, and several other sorts of wild flowers—and we had just got to the top of the high pass between pine-clad hills, and were descending the steep southern slope of the divide, when we stopped our troika, constrained thereto by the magnificent view which lay before us. Unfortunately, though I got out my camera, the development of the distant view, owing to a faulty exposure, failed, and I was only able to keep as a memento a picture of our troikas resting on the steep slope.

In the foreground the track, which is little more

than a wide cattle-track marked by wheels, and deep with black mud, fell away to a vast level valley surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills. On either side of the track were rocks surmounted by pines.

Below, deep down in the middle distance, lay a well-grassed valley, flat and smooth as a cathedral lawn, flower-flecked and forming a wide avenue between two walls of stately cedars, which threw their long shadows across the level grass. Beyond, in the dim blue haze of a gloriously fine day, some four miles of open green plain shelved gently to a lake, roughly circular in form. Over the quiet green slopes of this plain, which fell imperceptibly to the lake from the dark cedar-clad mountains, there swept, near the margin of the lake, mile-long sheets of sky-blue forget-me-nots, and nearer the foot of the hills, masses of blazing yellow buttercups.

Where the plain sloped up to the edges of the forest, stately cedars grew in isolated clumps, invading the open ground.

There were straight-backed Russian cattle—black, white, red, or piebald—grazing in very large herds, and some Kalmuk horses with their masters, true children of the steppe, galloping wildly round them. Near the lake a few Kalmuk huts, shaped like North

American Indian tents, and some stock-yards completed the picture.

When we got to the lake, Cattley and I had lunch under the pines, and took some photographs; and,

THE MAIN STREET OF ONGUDAI

starting again at four, we arrived late in the evening of the 28th at Ongudai, after doing ninety-two versts from Shebalina. Here we found Seton Karr and the younger Cattley.

We left Ongudai at noon on June 29th, passing

our two companions after a few hours. I had selected wheels, while Seton Karr had bargained for a pony caravan. I had three troikas, and after going over a very high and difficult pass, with a fine view of snow mountains from the top, we reached Kirkuchi, a little posting-house on a plain, which was walled in by steep pine-clad mountains and naked cliffs. The distance from Ongudai was thirty-five versts. The house was the usual pattern of posting-house, built of round timber and roofed with two layers of wooden planks. This house was prettily situated, overlooking the abrupt gorge of the Katun River.

We spent the evening with the peasant who keeps this house trying to fish in a small torrent, which fell into the Katun at the edge of the plain, but we caught nothing. There were some good pools, and our host had caught several fish. I believe they were grayling.

We pitched the tent and slept here till 3.30 a.m. on 30th June, but we did not get off till 5.30 a.m. Even then we could only get two small telyeshkas and a pack-pony, which we sent in advance.

We marched thirty-seven versts with another high pass to the Katun ferry, which we crossed, and rested at another posting-stage, called Ust-Iniya.

The same day, with changed horses, we continued

our journey for thirty-five versts to Iyedra, a small post-house on the Chuya. We crossed a plain on the true right bank of the Katun, and entered for the first time the gorge of the Chuya, far famed for its

FELT "YURTA" USED BY KIRGHIZ AND KALMUKS

splendid alpine scenery. We drove through this all the evening in a thunderstorm, and arrived in the dark at Iyedra, a station built close to the margin of the river.

This was kept by Kalmuks. The Kirkuchi station had been the last Russian one, the Ust-Iniya station

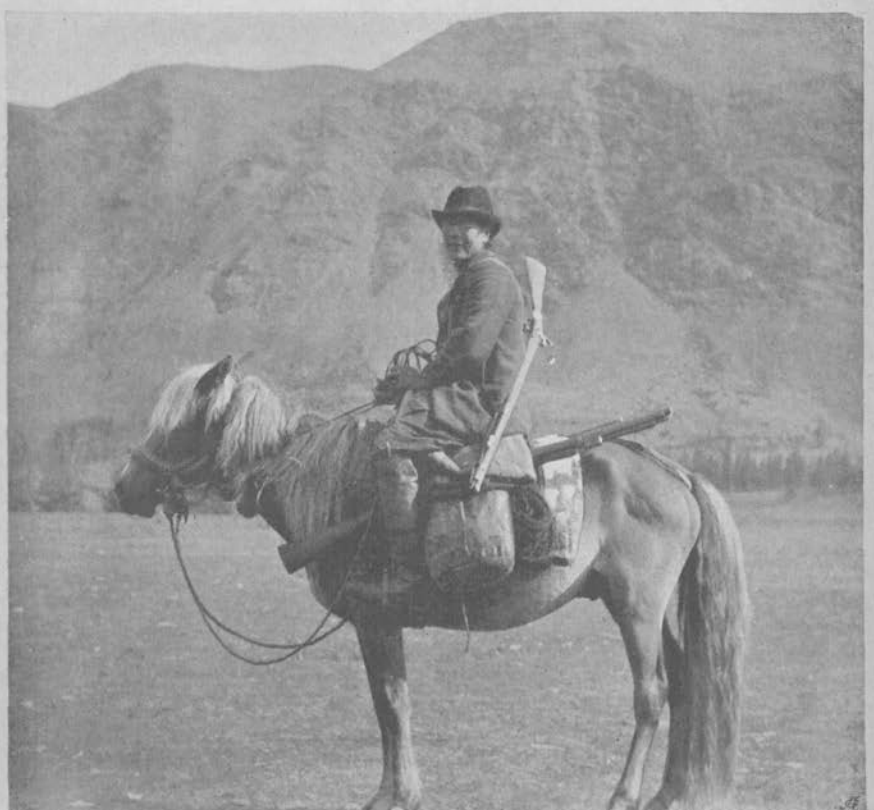
having been also kept by Kalmuks. And now our journey as far as the Mongolian frontier was to be entirely through the Kalmuk country, These Kalmuks call themselves Altaietz, or people of the Altai. The

KALMUK HUT AND SNOW MOUNTAINS, KURAI

only habitations on the Chuya, besides the posting-houses, are occasional groups of true Kalmuk huts, extinguisher-shaped, like American Indian tents, and roofed with bark, or by felt "yurtas," which are used by the richer Kalmuks, though I believe they are properly the Kirghiz type of dwelling. Some of the

wooden huts are shaped like the felt yurtas, with a perpendicular wall.

On 1st July we left Iyedra and marched to Aigulak,



A VACCINATOR GOING TO MONGOLIA

a morning march of about thirty-five versts. We passed through the same alpine country, generally skirting the river, and crossing handsome river-terraces

of smooth alpine pasture between fine mountains, the slopes of the latter reminding me of the Sindh Valley of Kashmir. There were patches of wheat cultivation near the Kalmuk settlements. The hills here were much decomposed by the extremes of heat and cold, and were evidently being rapidly demolished by denudation. In the valleys below were scattered rocks which had fallen from above.

At Aigulak we had to change to pack-pony transport, as there were no more carts to be had. We marched on the same evening to Chibit, twenty-two versts, making the acquaintance on the way of the Russian Ispravnik of Police, who was engaged in looking after the work on the new Chuya road, called the "Chuisky Tract." This road, commencing at Ongudai, completes the wheeled communication between Bisk and Kosh-Agatch, bringing the Siberian railway many days nearer to the Mongolian frontier. It is made chiefly, I believe, for the use of officials and for the encouragement of the Chinese trade in brick-tea, wool, and other commodities.

The Ispravnik was living in a large camp of clean felt "yurtas," with a police escort and a large staff of Russians and Kalmuks, travelling comfortably in much the same style in which a deputy commissioner travels in India. We stayed at the Ispravnik's camp

an hour, waiting for the train to clear, and then we galloped on after our pack-ponies and reached Chibit late. We had some trouble in crossing a stream at Chibit, as it rained all the evening.

PEASANT BUILDERS AT KURAI

On 2nd July I allowed the caravan to go on and stayed to hunt in the forest for roebuck, which were said to be plentiful here, but did not succeed in getting

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a head of this little buck. Then, galloping on with my tent-boy, Matai, a Russianised Kalmuk whom we had picked up at Iyedra, I reached Kurai with the caravan, after going thirty-five versts. All the scenes we had passed through had been splendid. A few versts before reaching Kurai we surmounted a very high pass, where we had an excellent view of a snowy range in front of us, overlooking the Kurai plain.

This Kurai was a comfortable spot, as the posting-house was quite new and unoccupied, the Kalmuk who was responsible for getting horses living with his family in a Kalmuk hut close by. This place and Kouaktenar were the two prettiest halting-places on the whole route. At Kurai we had a magnificent view, especially to the west, of snow mountains and glaciers, the finest mass being the Dyosh-tugol peak of the Biel-Kanak Range; while on one side of the house there was fine forest, and on the other was an open steppe stretching away for some fifteen versts or more. We stayed here till noon on 3rd July, re-organising our kit and taking photographs; we then marched, going over the plain in blazing heat to Kouaktenar, twenty-five versts.

The hut at Kouaktenar is well situated among pine forests and overhanging precipices corniced with

COOK-HOUSE TO POSTING STAGE, KOUAKTENAR

snow—typical ibex-ground ; and we were shown by a Kalmuk hunter the 38-inch horns of an ibex which he had shot here. He said ibex were plentiful, and he would be able to take us out next day if we would wait here, but he said he thought they did not grow longer than the head he had shown us. This did not seem good enough, so on 4th July we marched on to Kosh-Agatch, thirty-five versts. We had a great deal of trouble in getting across the Chuya River at this place, making a détour of some miles, and even then the pack-ponies got in so far that much of our kit became wet. It will not be very long, probably, before they have a bridge here.

We were now within forty miles of the home of the wild rams I had come so far to hunt.

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CHAPTER VII

THE HAPPY VALLEY AND MONGOLIA

OUR pony caravan, which we had come so far to organise, stood round us on the morning of July 9th outside Kosh-Agatch on the open gravel of the steppe. Seton Karr, being unwell, hired a country cart for the first march.

The Kosh-Agatch steppe is some fifty miles long by twenty-five wide, its length running east and west. It lies some 5,000 feet above the sea.

It is fairly level and looks like an old lake-bed, being nothing but barren gravel, save where sluggish streams twist undecidedly over it and raise a growth of small bushes and grass. It is a cheerless plain, swept by cold winds; and around are mountains streaked and capped with snow.

If the Lake of Geneva could be drained, its dry bed in winter would look very much like the Kosh-Agatch plain does in summer.

Behind us, the small sugar-loaf spire of the Kosh-Agatch village church showed as a white spot against the background of stony mountains. Before us,

twenty-five miles away, across the plain and walling it in, rose another mass of peaks, the threshold of Chinese Mongolia.

Immediately in front of us, a wide gap for which we were making marked where the Chagan-Burgaza stream entered the plain, and on our right front, six miles further to the west, another gap marked the Tarkuta.

KALMUK HUNTER, POWAR

Far in the distance, at the head of these waters, where they took their source in the high snow-capped dividing ridge of the frontier, and scarcely distinguishable in a murk of black clouds just breaking into rain, lay low, rounded summits. These we knew to be the home of the wild sheep.

Keeping our ponies at a jog-trot, at the rate of about five miles an hour, we crossed the plain, passing some small lakes, bordered by a little scanty vegetation and inhabited by Brahminy ducks. Later a few

specks proved to be yeren antelopes, but too shy to be stalked in this bare country, never letting us come nearer than five hundred yards. It was a cheerless march. The weather had been threatening us with rolling black clouds all day, and as we entered the Chagan-Burgaza gap the rain came down. We crossed the stream to the proper left bank, where some Kalmuk yurtas stood upon ground little raised above the swamp-bordered channel, and finally we camped uncomfortably at dusk a mile further up, where a shoulder of the converging foot-hills of the gap, coming down to the river, left a narrow margin of dry ground. The slopes of these hills, except where they broke into rocky detritus, were clothed with good grass, and would under ordinary conditions be likely ground for sheep, tame or wild. Indeed, we found them dotted over during the daytime with the Kalmuk flocks and large droves of ponies. Here, for the first time, we came on a pair of the ever-interesting horns of wild sheep, lying rotting in a disused channel which had been scoured out by the flood water.

Next day, the 10th, Seton Karr being still ill and not quite fit to travel, we halted.

The conformation of the hills here favouring rifle practice, and as we were still too far from the wild-sheep ground for there to be any risk of disturbing

them, I put up a target, made of laths and calico, and fired at it all day.

On 11th July we were again on the march. Beside myself, there were Seton Karr and the two Cattleys, Matai, a Russianised Kalmuk, who was my tent-boy, my Kalmuk cook, two hunters, six pony drivers, and eight pack-ponies. We had also hired twelve riding-ponies and the hunters had their own, so we were all mounted. We carried no fodder for the ponies, which are simply turned out to graze.

We followed the proper right bank, on a pony-track running along the narrow margin where the hill-slopes fell steeply to the stream.

As we advanced, we found in an old Kalmuk camp more remains of wild-sheep heads; and we came for the first time on wild rhubarb, growing luxuriantly, with a thick, red stem, as it grows in gardens at home.

After going ten versts, I left the caravan, taking two Kalmuks, and we put our ponies to the steep hill-sides to the west.

Further and further we climbed into the heart of the mountains, stopping often to spy through the glasses. We skirted below the steep cliffs on the Russian or north side of the frontier ridge, crossing the lower snows. At last, a heavy storm of rain and

sleet coming on, and there being no natural shelter, we sat down on the edge of a green saddle between two valleys, which was swampy with reindeer moss, and covered ourselves as well as we could with our cloaks.

As the weather began to clear, we were just getting up to start for the point of the river-bed which had been agreed upon for the camp, when one of the Kalmuks pointed to the other edge of our saddle, and there, looming large in the mist, were our first lot of wild sheep, some two hundred yards away, galloping hard, for they had just seen us.

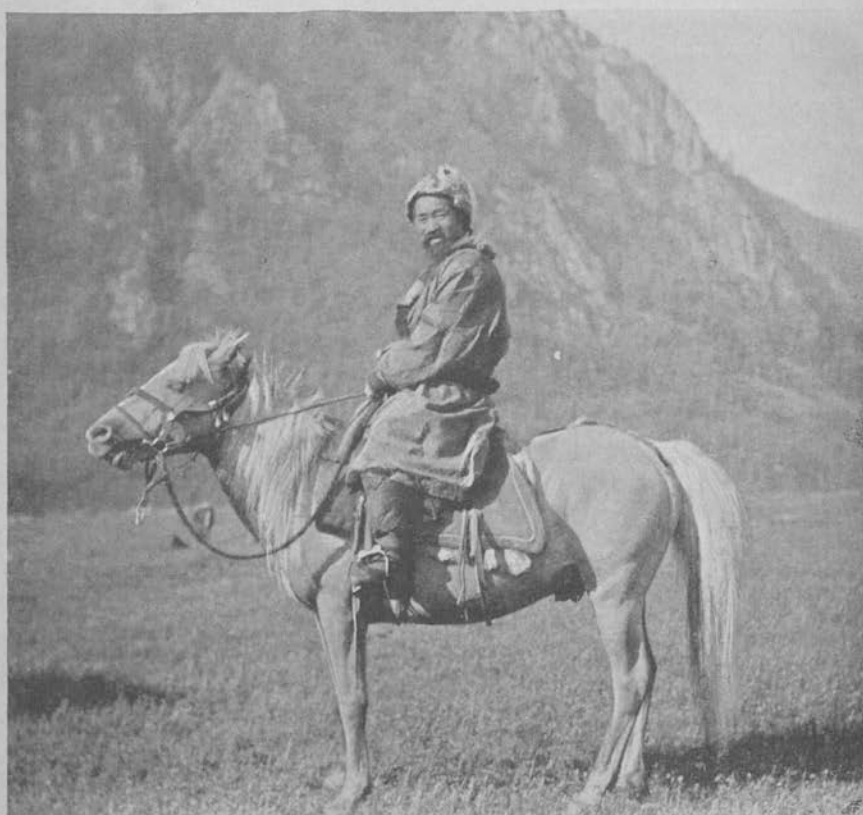
They turned out to be only ewes and young ones; all "arkar," in fact, but none the less interesting. So we took a rapid spy at them with the glasses as they stood for a moment before diving into the valley.

They looked taller and more active than any tame sheep, and of a dark or pale yellow-grey colour, according to the manner in which the light fell upon them. They looked very game animals.

We got back at nightfall into the river-bed, at a point ten miles above the place where we had left it; and after having made some casts up and down the river to look for traces of the caravan, we found it encamped a mile above us, under the hills, near the left bank of the river, and a mile below its junction

with its large tributary, the Bain-Chagan, from the south.

This Bain-Chagan is the "Happy Valley" men-



A KALMUK DRIVER

tioned by Demidoff, where so many wild sheep were found in 1897.

On July 12th I went out early. Seton Karr was

still feeling unwell, but intended to have a try after the sheep on the hills near camp.

I went with Powar, my hunter, up the main stream, the Chagan-Burgaza, which at the junction, as one ascends it, makes a sharp turn to the west.

There were alternate valleys and rounded bluffs coming down to the river-bed on the left bank, and we advanced along the sides of the hills on the right bank and on the opposite side to these bluffs, spying them carefully on our way.

During the day we saw in this way no less than five lots of "arkar," ewes and young rams; and towards evening we climbed up on to a very high plateau, at the back of the bluffs and overlooking them.

This plateau was covered with fallen rocks and splinters, loosely thrown together, with deep holes and chasms showing through the surface rubbish. Grass, moss, lichen, and flowers covered these here and there with a partial growth; and there were several boggy spots. It was a very bad place for ponies, and here in this desolate spot I found some fine skulls of *Ovis ammon;* but we saw no live rams, which seemed to have left the neighbourhood.

As we reached the other side of the plateau, away from the river, we found that it fell away to a deep

tributary valley, and we were looking down over snow cornices and sheer precipices.

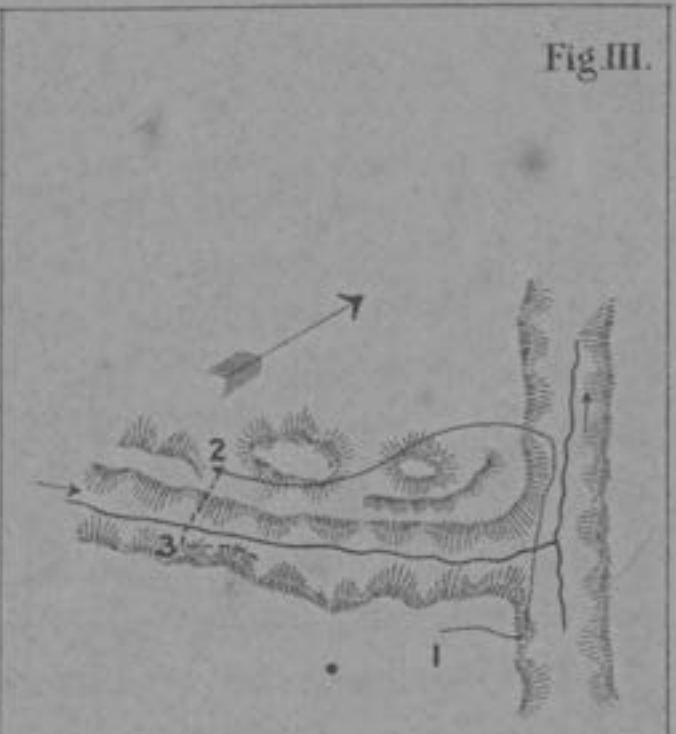
It seemed to be typical ibex-ground, like that in Kashmir and Ladak.

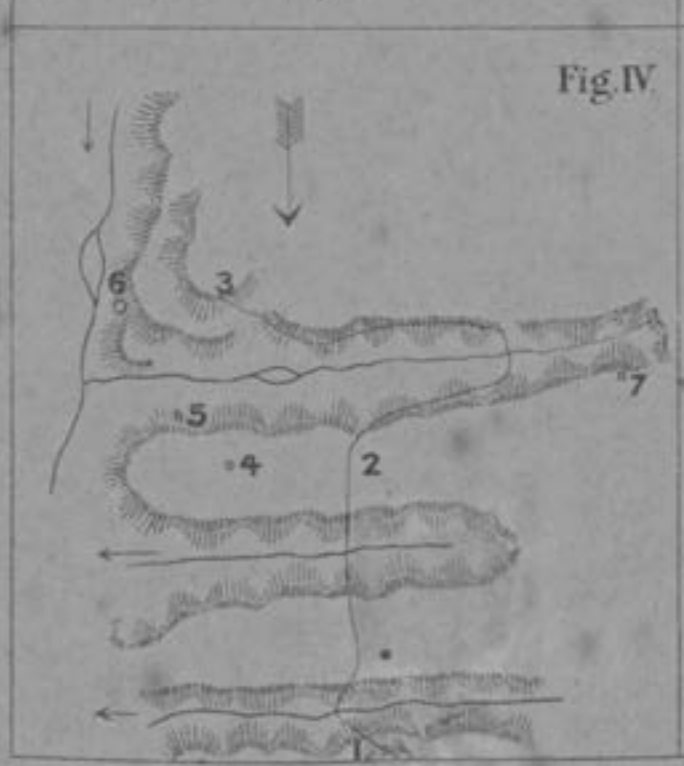
After searching the cliffs with our glasses for some time in the hope of finding ibex, we gave up the hunt and returned to camp.

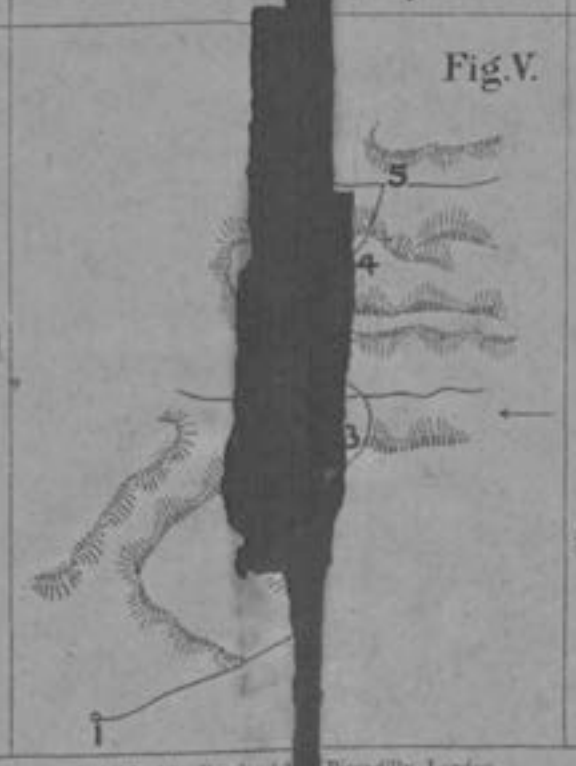
When I arrived, Seton Karr had not yet come in; but the Cattleys were there, and they said he had been away since the morning.

When it was nearly dark his hunter turned up, urging his pony down a steep incline towards camp, and to his saddle were tied several massive rams' heads. There were two or three derelict skulls picked out of the river, and one fine shot head—the first trophy of our trip. Then Seton Karr came in, very tired and done up.

At dinner he told us that in the morning he had come on several rams in the hills near camp, and leaving both his Kalmuks behind under cover, he had himself watched the flock all day, getting very cold and very stiff with the constrained position. Then, going partly in the open, he had crawled within shot of the herd, and had secured the ram which had been brought in; and I think it was on this stalk that he wounded another.







Face page 114.

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water-channels, the rough surface being some 500 yards wide, with streams flowing here and there, quietly at this time of day; though later, in the afternoon and night, they would bring a rush of water from the snows.

We first satisfied ourselves that the sheep were unlikely to move for a long time, and then we got back to the ponies, and mounted, signalling as we did so to the men behind to keep under cover.

Then followed an hour's stalk, in the course of which we again left our ponies, and we reached a second position of observation at the knoll. Then down under the river-scarp, and afterwards a painful crawl, almost under the eyes of the sheep, across the pebbly bottom of a tributary torrent a hundred yards in width, then back across again further up to the shelter of a terrace which ran along parallel to the main river, almost in continuation of the knoll, but separated from it by a gap through which we should have been seen had we taken the direct course. Here at last (at 5) we were down-wind of the game and not more than 250 yards away.

Inch by inch I crept up to the edge of this terrace; first laying down my hat, then getting my forehead and eyes over, and levelling the field-glass between the stems of grass. Then I could see them clearly.

Even though they could only be accounted fair rams, they were a sight to gladden a hunter's eyes; and one could almost count the wrinkles on the fine horns.

Powar reached out as he lay for four pebbles, and placed them by their sizes in the relative positions in which the sheep lay to one another. Then pointing to the biggest pebble, he whispered "bolshoi" (the big one). This I verified through the glass; and then we waited for about half an hour. I had several cautious spies through the glass, but could not make out even the biggest to have a really fine head; so getting impatient, and unwilling to lose the whole day, I deliberately whistled through my fingers to make the ram get up. The only result was that the youngest ram rose, stretched himself, and stared at me, my head being just visible. I lay unmoved for some minutes, and then changed position till I had the bigger ram, which was still sitting, covered by the rifle, and my finger crooked on the trigger. Then one of the ewes jumped up, and I took rather a hurried shot at 250 yards at the still sitting ram and missed him clean.

Away trotted the sheep, and I watched them, too disgusted to fire again, and fearing to wound by a running shot at such a distance. They were soon pelting away over a grassy bluff, and they never stopped even to look back.

As we had now disturbed the ground, we went home.

On the 14th we went down to Kosh-Agatch for firewood and supplies for the men, and I set out with the elder Cattley for a preliminary trip into Mongolia by way of the Happy Valley.

Seton Karr, who was still ailing and had elected to await my return with the younger Cattley, had now got a second trophy, rather a light one. As for me, I had been out from Kosh-Agatch a whole week with nothing to show for it, and felt that my trip would be a failure; hence my determination to try on the Mongolian side.

Early on the 14th we started, Cattley and I. Our small caravan consisted of the cook, hunter, three pack-ponies, and the smallest *tente d'abri* (only three feet high), in which we were both to sleep.

We kept nearly in my path of the day before, carefully scouting. We left behind us the scene of our initial defeat and clung to the right bank of the river, till at noon we reached the actual Bain-Chagan Pass. Here, as in the Chagan-Burgaza, the easy lower slopes of the valley, hitherto covered with grass, converging and getting steeper as we advanced, had now run up into tremendous chasms, bare of all vegetation and overhung by black precipices streaked with nearly perpendicular snow.

This was no longer the home of the sheep, but ibex-ground, and as we had a long march before us we shut up our glasses and hurried on up the torrent-bed, hemmed in by precipices, which wound up on to the Chinese divide. When this should have run up into a saddle and the ground begin to fall in front of us into another valley, we should be looking into Chinese Mongolia.

It was a bad road, half water, half boulders, disagreeably rough for ponies; and higher up we had to climb the sides of the gully to avoid sheets of old snow-slip, which filled the bottom of the gorge. We reached breezy open ground, crossed half a mile of swampy reindeer moss and clay, and then knew we had reached the exact point of meeting of the two empires.

A fine valley fell away from our feet to the south-east, which by looking at the maps we identified as that leading to the Suok Karaul, the first Chinese post. A mile to our right front and 300 feet above us, across a further interval of boggy ground and overlooking the valley which led to Suok, was a craggy peak; and seeing that by climbing to the top of this we should get a good view of sheep-ground in front, for this peak we made.

A cold wind came up in our faces, pale blue moun-

KALMUK DRIVER AND PONY

tain ranges rose into snow peaks and glaciers everywhere in the semicircle of vision to the south of us, looking cold and remote, but beautifully white in the strong sunlight; and though we beheld peak upon peak for a hundred miles and more, nowhere could we see near enough for recognition the dark shadows which would have indicated forests or clumps of trees. It all gave the idea of bare grassy hills, shallow open grass valleys, and rock-flanked snow peaks.

We left our ponies under cover and crept to the top of this peak (Cattley, the hunter, and I), and began to spy the open green mountain shoulders which fell away in our immediate front. Then the sharp-sighted Powar dropped behind a rock and held out his hand for the large telescope. He focussed it and wedged it between two stones, and was able to show me a flock of eleven fine rams lying across a spur far below us. They must have been 1,500 yards away, but such was the bare nature of the green slopes that we dared not leave the shelter of the crags round us. We had long ago lost sight of our caravan, which we had cautioned to keep under cover and on no account to come up till we sent back a message.

The glass gave us much interesting occupation for an hour, for this was the first fine flock we had seen; and its members were lying, by the nature of the ground, fully exposed to our scrutiny.

Sometimes a ram, carrying heavy horns, would get up, graze along slowly, and lie down again in another place. The others lay still, looking about them, only their heads moving. They kept glancing to right and left and down the valley, sometimes two or three getting up and standing together, looking down hard into the valley with their backs turned to us, and lying down again. We realised what their life must be like—one of constant vigilance against wolves and Kalmuk or Kirghiz hunters.

The afternoon passed. Cattley and Powar were both asleep; and I was just wondering whether the former would suffer with his head uncovered to the sun, and was about to rectify this, when another look at the flock showed me that they were all standing staring, first up past our crag, then into the valley below; and then they took to their heels, streaming away to the left over the spur and disappearing in a deep valley beyond.

Powar, having been awakened by me, was just in time to see the last sheep disappearing, and looked very puzzled; but a glance back at the horizon-line of a hill a mile behind us showed the figures of our drivers and pack-ponies in full view, black against the skyline. They had become nervous, being in a strange country, and had followed us for company's

sake; and this easily accounted for the panic of the sheep.

There was nothing to be done, so we made our way back to our idiotic Kalmuks, and as the sun was not two hours from setting and it had turned cold, we lit a fire with the last of the wood we had brought with us and made some tea for all hands; and then we hurried on over stony hillsides, ever descending, till there lay before us a deep V-shaped valley, with a strip of green along the narrow bottom, where there was promise of shelter from the now freezing wind. But before we could reach it there appeared before us an 800-foot descent, the loose shaly slope lying at an angle of unstable equilibrium just steeper than it ought to lie; and as we zigzagged over it the ponies sent showers of stones into the valley. As one led one's pony, a slide of hoofs louder than usual would warn one to spring aside, the bridle would slacken, and the pony's head would shoot past one as he skated down, only able to pull up by jumping straight like a goat into the softer rubbish and waiting for it to stop avalanching. At last, at dusk, we got down and were on green grass again; and here, as the sun set, we made our first camp in Chinese territory, Cattley and I pitching the *tente d'abri*, and piling stones on its edges to keep it from letting in

the cold night wind. The Kalmuks had no covering save their dirty wadded and sheepskin clothes, but they collected the saddles round a scour-hole in a dry water-channel and lay under its shelter.

For the first time the searchers returned without good fuel; for we had long left the region of firewood and had already used up our spare stock; so we had to be content with a scanty supply of *tezek*, collected in our hired Kalmuk saddle-bags. This, as every Central Asian traveller knows, is dried horsedung, left by the herds of practically wild ponies which are driven up here to feed in winter. They find grazing in spots where the snow does not lie even in winter for various causes—generally, I believe, exposure to high winds.

On 15th July we got up early and repacked everything; and by seven we were marching eastward up this valley till we got to its head and gained open downs.

We journeyed a mile over this and then halted on a commanding knoll, and soon Powar, who had been working with the glasses, pointed out a flock of thirteen sheep. It was at first difficult to find them with my large telescope, which has great magnifying power and a small field, but by pointing to certain snowy peaks in the distance, twenty miles away, and

to where a green ridge, a mile from us, mounted up so as to nearly blot out the snowy horizon, I at last dropped the telescope on to them. There were thirteen in all, mostly old rams, and one or two ewes and young rams, grazing on the very summit of the ridge. A shallow valley lay between, dropping to the left towards a village of Mongolian nomads two miles away, where a large herd of horses, cattle, and sheep was being rounded in for stock-taking; these were the first inhabitants we had seen on the Chinese side, and I wondered what would be the effect on them of the shot I hoped to fire if they should hear it at all. But they were galloping wildly about, and though the distance prevented us hearing it, they must have been making a tremendous noise, and so would probably not detect me. What race of men they were we could not make out at the distance, but the hunter said they were probably Mongols.

Steadily we watched these sheep for an hour, and at last we started, Cattley, Powar, and I, to crawl over an open saddle across the valley to the left, below the sheep and within full view, for their position, as usual, commanded every inch of ground within a mile or two. We must have been 1,500 yards away; but by great caution we had made fifty yards, when a ram we had not noticed before appeared right in our front,

on the side of the valley nearest to our original look-out post. Back we crawled and passed round to the rear of the hill, to where our ponies were waiting; again we crept forward to our original look-out post, and spied for yet another herd. The solitary ram had disappeared, but the flock was in the same position on top of the green hill.

Suddenly the whole flock, which had been so quiet all the morning, was seen to bunch up and trot away along the hill-top to a deep chasm on our right, where it disappeared for a time and then re-appeared as a long string of animals walking slowly, pictured against the skyline of the main frontier ridge, which was a wall of brown precipices and snow cornices.

They crossed this, the top of the Russo-Chinese divide, and descended to the Chagan-Burgaza, and we saw them no more. Seton Karr was there on the Siberian side, as it happened, on that day, and afterwards told me about this flock, which I had driven over to him without knowing it at the time.

From the position of my ponies and men when I looked back, I suspected the flock had caught a glimpse of them—hence our defeat.

This flock was gone for ever. We continued our march, feeling rather low. There are plenty of ups

and downs, in more senses than one, in this kind of shooting. Towards noon we came to some cliffs overlooking a big valley some 600 feet deep, with boulder-strewn slopes lying steeper than the proper angle of rest. And as we crept into the outermost overhanging crag to spy (at 1, Fig. II.), Powar pointed at once to a small flock of a dozen rams galloping down the slope not 400 yards away (at 2). I signalled to Cattley to come up, this being a good opportunity for him to use the telescope and share with me the glorious sight which it was certain we should have when they should stop at the other side of the chasm. We were not disappointed. They were a long way off and were not badly frightened, having bolted at the first alarm, probably having heard us, without having properly made us out in our brown clothes among the dark confusion of crags.

The rams moved on, and were last seen by me climbing slowly up the lower slopes and precipices of the opposite hill; meanwhile, leaving my companion and the men and all the ponies to watch at the edge of the chasm from above, and taking Powar, I started on foot down the slope to our right front, and now sliding, now jumping like goats on to soft moving shale, we at last reached the bottom of the valley, very hot. Here we got an iced drink by lying flat over

the edge of the clear brook which issued from a small ice-field below a big overhanging half-demolished snow-cornice.

Then we started to climb 700 feet up the other slope, working at first to the left along the contour. After half an hour I was so done that I rested and watched for signals from the crags where Cattley was waiting, but could not make him or the ponies out; and I sent Powar climbing on, to round the spur and endeavour to ascertain the present position of the flock. This took an hour, and I was getting impatient and stiff and very tired, when at last he appeared, looking blankly at me, and only replied, "*ne znaiyu*" (I don't know) to my whispered questions. Another long cast of half an hour straight uphill brought us to what we thought was the top; but when we were clear of the rocks there were many elusive summits of green hill towering successively above us, and it was well on in the afternoon by the time we reached the real summit. By this time I was crawling, sitting down, gasping, after every twenty steps; for we were at some 9,000 or 10,000 feet above sea-level, and my stay in the country had been too short for me to have yet become used to the elevation, besides which, I was utterly done up.

Powar, who went a long way ahead, took off his felt

boots, and creeping forward, peered over the final summit; here he beckoned to me, so I made a spurt and threw myself down at his side.

There were the sheep, galloping straight away

OUR KALMUK COOK, YEMBAI, IN CAMP AT TARKUTA

down an easy mile-long slope of grass into the next valley, a rather shallower one than the great valley we had crossed. We looked back and could now see our ponies standing quietly in their old position behind

the crags, little dots against the skyline a mile away. The sheep had not seen them from the bottom of the valley, but from this height they were no longer under cover.

However, it was worth while going on, as this was a fine flock, and we should now only have an easy walk downhill over a grassy plateau, and Powar hoped to catch sight of them again when we should be able to look into this second valley ahead of us. We walked down this carefully and slowly, standing upright on tiptoe every few steps and spying through our field-glasses. I was too done to walk fast. At last we saw them again (from 3), and fell flat and wormed ourselves forward to some stones which gave a little cover. Here a careful spy showed the flock to have settled down under some tooth-like rocks (at 4) on the further side of the valley in front of us. There would be a hundred yards of flat, bare rock to cross out of view, and then we should have to work round the head of the valley on our right and climb along the contour a little above the sheep, so as to get a spy down on them from crags above them and 200 yards distant. This we did, and it took us only half an hour. But just before reaching it we found our crag to be slightly up-wind of the flock, and had to desist and try a better way.

We then made a détour of a mile round the head of the green shallow open valley, on the edge of which they lay, and towards five in the afternoon we were crawling, glass in hand, foot by foot to the edge of a grass bluff down-wind and 200 yards away from them. I had let Powar crawl five yards ahead of me with his glasses, and lay taking in breath myself (at 5). He was very deliberate, and slowly began making the usual map with pebbles, to show the situation of the two biggest rams, when I had at last got up to his side. Suddenly he rose and began running to the right, and leaving my hat and glasses on the grass and seizing my rifle, I followed, first glancing to the plateau in the direction from which I had come, only to see the ponies being brought up (at 6)—they had again frightened my rams! But all this was seen at a glance. The sheep were not a hundred yards away, galloping full speed along the contour, and before I could get a proper right-and-left shot they had disappeared round the corner, so both shots missed. I seized the other rifle and ran on, and got a moving shot at 200 yards at the last ram, and heard the loud "tell" of the bullet striking; also another shot which missed.

Running up, I reached the brow of the plateau and saw the flock streaming away to the frontier ridge,

which was here only two miles away; but the wounded ram had left the flock, and was to be seen going down the hill in front. I got him with another shot fired from the plateau edge (from 7).

This was my first ram. His was a lighter trophy than the other four bagged by me afterwards, his horns measuring 40 inches round the curve. In the hurry of a running shot I had been unable to choose.

Still, he was an *Ovis ammon* ram, and I hoped he would change my luck. We camped at the bottom of the long and steep slope on which the dead ram lay, in another valley sheltered from the wind. Our "kotchkor" steaks were very good eating, and we lived on little else but mutton for the rest of the trip.

This ram measured 72 inches from nose to tail and 45 inches in height at the withers. He looked as large as a donkey, and was a good deal larger than the set-up museum specimens I had seen. The shrinking of the skin before specimens are set up may account for this, where there are no skeletons to guide.

On the 16th I started with Powar on a ride to the east, but the weather looked so threatening, with heavy black clouds, that when snow began to fall thickly, with a freezing wind, we turned tail and came into camp, after doing only four miles.

In the afternoon we marched over the Chagan-Burgaza Pass back into Siberia, and found the main camp in the same place. Seton Karr had found the

SIBERIAN ARGALI (OVIS AMMON)

head of his wounded ram, a particularly fine one; so now he had two good heads and one small one. My ram's head was a good deal smaller than the large one he had first shot.

We spent the rest of the 16th looking for derelict heads near camp; and, with those we had collected from the river-bed before, we had twenty skulls in camp that evening. We put them together and drew lots for them one by one; and I became the owner of nine derelict heads and one shot specimen of moderate size.

Next day, 17th, we sent them all down to Kosh-Agatch to be kept for us there.

We had arranged in London to have two caravans and journey side by side, separating occasionally should different hunting-grounds tempt us; and as I had seen more rams in Mongolia, and further, was interested in that country, I determined to at once go back there.

We were both rather tired of the Kalmuks, who mutinied on this day, saying they were sick of having work to do, and they had to be appeased with a bottle of vodki. Seton Karr felt that he had a satisfactory collection of trophies and decided to make his way back to England. He took the younger Cattley with him. Later, I heard that he had shot another ram before he actually left.

CHAPTER VIII

FIRST SUCCESS

WE left the main camp, the elder Cattley and I, at 3.30 p.m. on 17th July, for the Mongolian ground, where I had decided to spend the rest of the trip.

We marched up the Chagan-Burgaza Pass. While we were still on the Siberian side, and as the slopes of the valley began to converge into ibex-ground, Powar and I, who were scouting ahead, spied a large herd of some twenty *Ovis ammon* grazing on a bluff overlooking the river, at the foot of a stone shoot about 800 feet high.

A dark snowstorm was raging three miles down the valley and was coming towards us, also the evening light was falling; so first going back and asking Cattley to camp in a sheltered spot at the river level with as little noise as possible, and to keep the ponies out of view, I hurried on ahead on foot. The snow coming up as we lay spying, obscured the sheep; so we were able to work down some way towards the level of the river, opposite to where the sheep were

lying, hoping in the thick weather to get under the bluff and creep up for a shot. But though they were a mile away they saw us, and scattering like a burst shell they collected again at the stone shoot and began deliberately to climb up its sides. I never saw such a queer place for sheep; they seemed to climb quite as well as ibex; and we watched them till it was quite dark. The storm moderating, we made our way back to camp over grass slopes on which the snow lay thickly.

On the 18th we got up early and marched over the pass to the camp where I killed my first ram, and we found vultures there eating the remains of dinner left round camp by the cook. We marched some ten versts to the south-east in the direction of Suok, and requiring mutton, pitched camp for the night half a mile above the Mongol village of Zamok, which we had seen from a distance on July 15th.

We wondered what these first natives on the Chinese side of the frontier would be like.

The "karaul" was surrounded by a packed mass of sheep and goats and long-haired black or grey and white yaks; and dogs were barking round the "yurtas," or felt huts. Towards evening I sent the hunter down to buy a sheep, and he brought three Mongols riding back with him, who looked good-

natured, honest sort of fellows. The leader offered me snuff out of a jar with a long slender spoon in it; also some cheese and butter, both the latter being very sour.

These men said they were in the employment of the Chinese Government; and they called themselves

MONGOL SHEPHERD

soldiers, and pointed to their curious red cloth caps, provided with ears, shaped very like those of Mephistopheles on the stage. They carried no arms, and were clearly not regular soldiers. They seemed more like caretakers of government flocks.

They stayed a long time, smoking our cigarettes, and promised to show us rams next day.

On July 19th I took out Powar and one Mongol and made a long search to the west for sheep. I had long since given up taking pack-ponies with lunch-

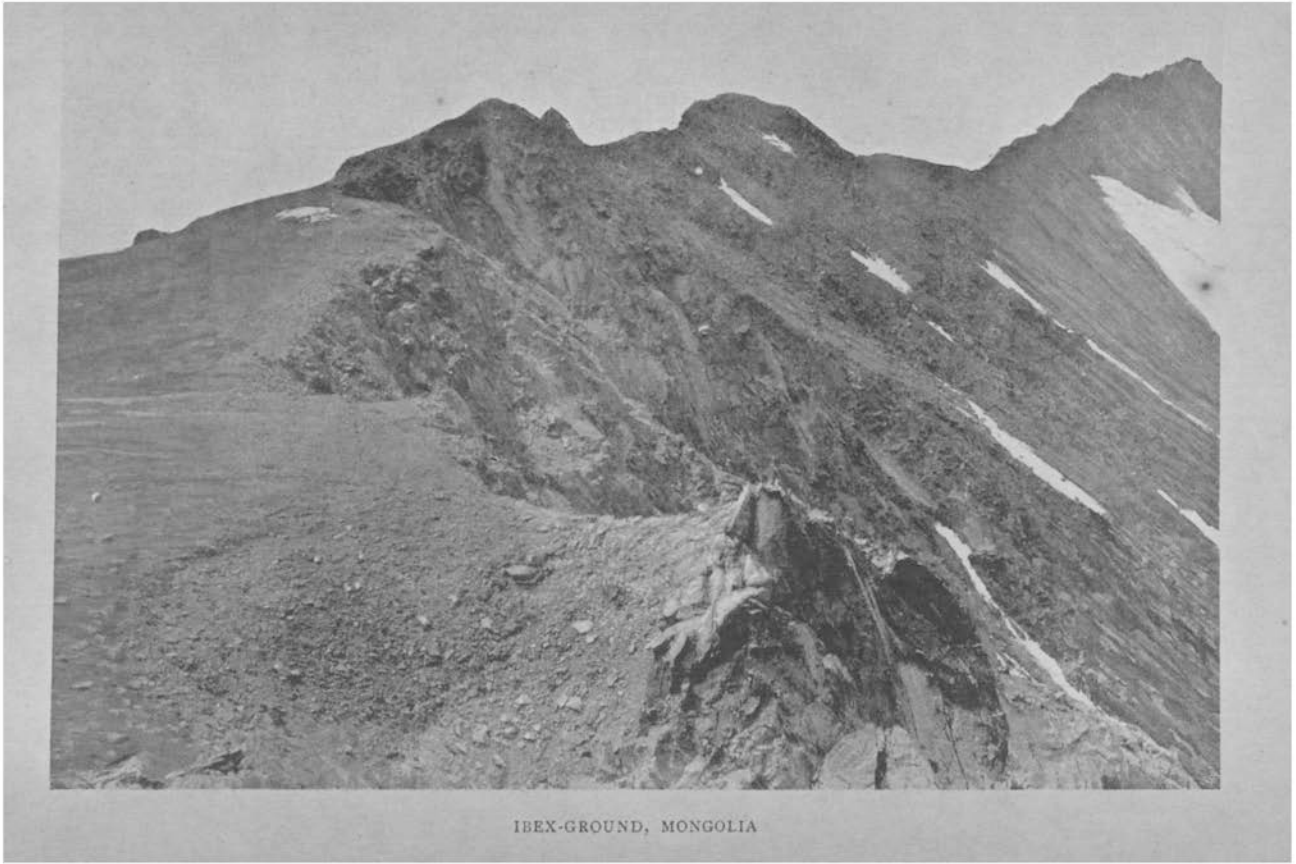
baskets, as they had never failed to appear on the sky-line at the wrong moment, spoiling the stalks. We wandered up and down for some miles before we saw any game; and then some pale specks appeared three miles away in a direct line, which on using the large telescope we identified as a herd of ibex, about a dozen in number. Several were carrying long curved horns, so I resolved to get nearer.

A slight snowstorm coming on, we sat it out under a commanding crag; and when the weather cleared we made a march of a few miles to another commanding position only a mile from the ibex, from which we could watch them better. When we reached it, I sent home the Mongol soldier, because he was too conspicuous. He wore a bright red cap, had a red saddle-cloth, and had not the slightest idea of keeping himself or his pony under cover.

A tremendous green valley, with a climb up the further side of some 1,200 feet, separated us from the ibex; but we were able to ride a good deal of the way on the powerful, strong-lunged little ponies.

At last we were half-way up the final ascent, and throwing loose the bridles on our ponies' necks, we climbed up on foot for a shot.

The top of this hill must have been high, probably



IBEX-GROUND, MONGOLIA

about 10,000 feet above sea-level; for I was much more out of breath than would be accounted for by the steepness of the slope.

At the summit I felt quite done, but we no sooner got there and were preparing to spy, when there was a trampling sound, and the ibex could be seen;—at least their heads and horns were visible over the intervening swell of the summit, as they galloped across, going from our right to our left, at 150 yards' range.

No time was lost in knocking one of the horned ones over; but he got up and followed the herd, finally lagging behind and taking to some precipitous crags.

I was very tired, but also took to the crags, and at last managed to shoot him across a snow-cornice, as he stood a yard or two from the edge of a 200 feet drop.

His horns proved to be 36 inches, and the hunter said they do not grow much larger in these mountains.

Later on in the trip we had two more ibex hunts, but saw nothing carrying horns over 42 inches. They are thus inferior, as trophies, to the Kashmir ibex, and must not be confused with those of Turkestan—which have very fine horns, up to 50 inches and more.

On the way to camp we found several heads of wild sheep, and we put one skull on a high stone ready for the caravan to pick up on the morrow.

Before leaving the top of the plateau where the ibex had been bagged, we saw far below, not three miles away, a miniature lake covered with thick ice and snow, and chose it for the next day's camp.

Up to this time I had been more than ten days on sheep-ground, and there were only one small ram's head and a very moderate ibex to show for the hard work.

I had only allowed myself three weeks on both sides of the frontier, and now half this time had gone without real success. I was beginning to think my trip would be for nothing.

On July 20th we left the village of Zamok and marched to the snow lake, which we found out from the Mongols was called Tilig; and Cattley brought forward the camp this fifteen versts, while I went out at nine a.m. in the direction of the hill where I had bagged the ibex.

After going half the distance (to 1, Fig III.) and somewhere near the place we had left the derelict trophy, we spied a herd of eighteen rams, sitting down watching the valley below (at 2), and though I little guessed it, success was to come to me that day.

Looking back towards Zamok, our last night's camp, we could see the wide valley where we had picked up the skull; and this valley rose and narrowed, leading past on our right hand towards the snow lake which I had chosen for the new camp.

The sheep were in a tributary valley which, as we looked back towards Zamok, entered this main valley from our left at right angles; and they were in such a position that if Cattley and the caravan, in changing camp, should come past the point of junction, they would be seen, from a distance of a mile and a half, by the rams.

We were waiting for the caravan to appear, and intending to ride down under cover of a ridge and give them warning, when the sheep began to graze along the side of their tributary valley in the direction away from the point of junction with the main valley; and turning a corner of a spur, they were no longer visible from the junction. So as it was now safe, we just rode to the junction and followed the main valley down till we could approach the tributary valley by the back of the high hill, on the lower slopes of which the sheep were grazing.

The détour was one of about three miles, but we topped the hill at last and could see down into the

tributary valley—with the wind right; but the sheep must have been far below us, hidden from our view, and as we had not seen them for over an hour, it became necessary to find them again.

Powar was very good at this kind of work. He rode his pony slowly down the steep slope, rising in his stirrups and spying through the field-glass. I followed, stooping in the saddle, fifty yards behind him, ready to dismount quickly.

Up and down the hill we went for over an hour, but without success, and at last, going back to the summit, we left our ponies and tried again on foot. When we had climbed nearly to the bottom and were close to the head of the valley, Powar lay flat on the hillside and began to spy more definitely. I crawled down to his side, for I had been following well above him; and with my little Zeiss glass I made out several rams, lying about among some steep rocks low down, overhanging the grassy meadow at the bottom of the valley.

The stalk was a difficult one, the slope of the hill giving no cover. I had to crawl down by alternately straightening and bending my knees, keeping my head back out of sight and resting the rifle across the hips. I got within 170 yards, and fired deliberately at the only ram which was to be seen. He dropped

TYPICAL IBEX GROUND, MONGOLIA

stone dead in his tracks, and the flock galloped into the meadow below and were up the opposite slope in no time. They went together like a pack of hounds, and it would not have been difficult to empty the magazine of the Mannlicher into them and wound several, only to die later by wolves. But I waited, and they stopped at 300 yards' distance, when I fired the left barrel of the ·450 at the hindmost ram, aiming a little above the top line of the withers. He also dropped stone dead in his tracks (at 3), and an examination of both carcases showed a hit in exactly the right place—straight through the heart.

Success at last! But owing to distances dwarfing the grand horns, I did not care to believe in my luck till I could see them from close by; so I ran down the hill over the loose stones, getting out my pocket-tape meanwhile. Both heads turned out to be good ones. The horns of the one shot at the longer distance, which were very curly, measured 51 inches on the curve, $18\frac{1}{4}$ inches in circumference, and $26\frac{3}{4}$ inches between tips; those of the other measured $48\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, $19\frac{1}{4}$ inches in circumference, and $35\frac{1}{2}$ inches between tips. Sending Powar back to the top of the hill to get the ponies, I threw myself down in the meadow and drank from the brook which ran through the centre of this valley. As I looked down stream

one ram lay to the right of me, a hundred yards away, and twenty feet above me on the hillside; while the other lay to my left, thirty yards away and as many feet above me, on the opposite slope.

As the latter ram lay on steep ground, I climbed up and rolled him down to the stream, to make it easier for the pony to get near him for packing purposes.

After a long and solitary wait at this spot, and not until sunset, did Powar appear round the shoulder of the hill behind me, bringing the ponies; and it was nearly dark when we got down to the junction of the valleys.

On the way we heard wolves. Their howling was like that of a pack of jackals round an Indian station, but deeper and more weird. They do not form large packs, and give little or no trouble to human beings, I am told. In Southern Siberia one hears no stories of the wolf-and-sleigh kind. Arrived at the junction, we turned to the right up the main valley and followed it for two miles, passing many skulls of wild sheep scattered along the base of the hills; and then climbing up the proper left slope of this main valley for 500 feet, we dropped down into a wild mountain basin, where we found the camp pitched near the margin of the snow lake, or tarn, which we had seen before from the ibex hill.

KALMUKS AND PONY

Cattley had nearly given me up for the night, and was delighted to see the two fine heads hanging on Powar's saddle.

The 21st July we spent in a fruitless seach for wild sheep, and returned early only to spend a very disagreeable afternoon at Snow Lake Camp, owing to the number and virulence of the mosquitoes. Contrary to the habits of their brethren in India, which bite mostly at night, these Siberian mosquitoes are most active on the hot days of sunshine, the cold sending them to rest at dusk. They were so bad that we decided to move camp next day, entirely on their account. Only on the Belezoni Canal, on the Tana River of East Africa, a noted place for them, have I known them to be so bad; so if one should wish to sleep in the day, mosquito curtains would be useful, though we used none ourselves. The mosquitoes are not generally bad everywhere, but only on certain hot days and in certain spots where the grass is swampy; often they occur quite high up on the hilltops, where snow has lately been lying.

I had now struck what Prince Demidoff in his book calls a golden vein, in more senses than one.

In this summer month of July, in all the stalks I had already had and in those which were to follow, we had been riding over hills covered with green

and gold, over sheets of cowslip and buttercup, marguerite, wild pansy, and blue and grey forget-me-not; and often we found edelweiss. Being ourselves at over 8,000 feet above sea-level, there was nothing to obstruct the view over the open treeless hills to the great mass of Muss-ta, distant about thirty miles, rising with his head in eternal snow, above all possibility of civilisation and above all commonplace —a fine peak for the Alpine climber, probably having an altitude of anything up to 12,000 feet.

The rocks, where they rose above the carpet of grass and flowers, were flecked with hot burnt sienna, bright rusty-red, or pale green, or lemon-yellow lichens, vying with the flowers in brightness of hue.

All that has been said of the beauty of Alpine pastures, pine forests, snow peaks and glaciers, and of the fascination of the southern veldt or the western prairie, holds good of the Altai and the Mongolian frontier.

Everywhere the green grass or rock-covered slopes are clean; there is no dust or mud, which are only abominations of wheeled traffic, where the ground is cut up too often for the grass to keep its hold.

The weather is changeable in these regions. Sometimes it rains, sometimes hailstones as large as peas come down, and one is glad of the protection of

a pith hat; or one looks over a bank of flowers, in the bright sunshine, to snow-sprinkled slopes gleaming white against an inky cloud, perhaps three or four miles away; or the dawn shows the hilltops white with the sprinkling of the night before. Then, like ocean waves, seeming to rouse themselves to greater effort, they heave their shoulders, here and there, up into spotless white, where the light new snow overlies the covering left unmelted from last winter.

The most prominent picture left in my mind's eye of these scenes is that of my hunter's back, as he leads the way on his little pony, field-glass in hand, a fur cap, skin turned outwards, on his head, and a short pigtail; thick, wadded clothes hide the squat figure, while a large grey overcoat with a light blue edging, and a slung rifle go over all; and on his legs are baggy breeches and felt-lined knee-boots, with soft mocassin soles. The man and his pony are a blend of quiet tertiary greens and browns, with a background of steeply sloping hillsides, ablaze with golden or purple wild flowers.

Our camp life in these wilds was primitive. Besides Cattley and myself, there were only six Kalmuks, the best of whom were Powar, the hunter, Matai, my tent-boy, and Yembai, the cook. These three did all the work, not because they could in any

way be called industrious, but because they knew a word or two of Russian, and were a degree less lazy and independent than the remaining three, who would do nothing except lasso and pack the ponies, and help to pitch their own tents or ours.

Yembai could not cook a bit at first; his one talent and claim to our admiration lay in chasing fish (probably grayling) up and down the shallows of the streams, till they sulked in some pool; then down would go his bare arm under the weeds, and up would come a fish. Cattley kindly did most of the cooking; and we took our meals at odd times, whenever there was time for the *tezek* (or dried horsedung fuel) to burn. We did our own laundry work in the sunshiny hours between snowstorms.

None of the Kalmuks had the slightest idea of obeying orders, and money seemed to have no particular attraction for them; so when they put their hand to any piece of work, it was done out of good nature, in off moments when they were not seriously employed in making themselves comfortable, chewing dried wild mutton, or loudly sipping tea.

By far the best man we had was Powar, the hunter. He alone of the Kalmuks knew his business. His eyes were those of a hawk, and he could get the maximum of service out of a field-glass or telescope.

A more conscientious hunter, or a more pleasant wild companion to spend a long day's hunting with, I don't remember. His Russian was as limited as mine. "Skurry sichass" (look sharp, at once) was his invariable signal for the attack; then there was "bolshoi kotchkor" (big ram); "boom" (shoot-sign language); "ow-ow-ow," and tearing at the waistcoat (wolves);

KALMUK BOY

A KALMUK COWBOY

and when the stalk failed and the sheep streamed away, his speech culminated in a cheerful "Odam!" To which of my predecessors he owed this phrase I don't know. Whenever we failed, and it was at all late, he would point to camp and say, "Chai pit" (drink tea).

He had one great fault, for it was difficult to induce him to take the trouble to track wounded game.

Perhaps the most vivid of my camp recollections

are those of my various sporting followers ; all rough-hewn characters, without polish as without vulgarity. Deria Hassan, Somali; Gaffur Bux, Kashmiri; Powar, Kalmuk ; they all have a family likeness, though their homes are so far apart. They have alike the characteristics which express the attitude of the untutored man to his civilised brother ; while there are other characteristics, mainly physical, widely differing, which date from the dawn of the race, before the formation of language ; the colour of the skin, the slant of the eye, or texture of the hair ; the characteristics of the African, the Aryan, or the Mongol. But in their camp ways and in their attitude to their master they are the same.

CHAPTER IX

AMONG THE WILD SHEEP

ON July 22nd we shifted camp. The caravan first got into the main valley and then followed its course upstream to the eastward for ten versts.

Meanwhile we went out, and after riding for two miles along an ascending slope we came to a great valley, where there were no less than 400 ewes and young rams—too many to count—and not at all shy (at 1, Fig. IV.). They could see us plainly standing above them only 300 yards away, and seemed to know they were not fair game. This was curious, for the Kalmuks make no distinctions when they go shooting, and one would think the wolves would prefer the ewes and lambs.

It was not till we walked towards them waving a handkerchief that they made off, and then they joined together in bands from all points of the compass like an Abyssinian army corps assembling for a review, and streamed down into the valley below by a goat track. They were soon lost to sight, but the valley reverberated with their loud and deep baaing. This

was the only time I ever heard wild sheep making a noise. Of course I had not fired, but had reserved my cartridges for nobler game.

We made a détour to the left to avoid these "arkar," and we ourselves also disappeared into the great valley by another goat track. The ground was so steep that we dismounted and dragged the bridles over the ponies' ears; then man and pony avalanched together, as quietly as might be, down the loose and soft grey shale. It was an 800-foot stumble down a slope tilted up at apparently much over forty-five degrees. When we had got half-way down, Powar pulled himself and his pony up, ankle-deep in gravel, and with the most comical expression of contrition on his face showed me there was no rifle—he had left it at the top of the hill, where he had been looking at the ewes. One gets into the bad habit of not carrying one's rifle in this country, as it is mostly riding work, and the Kalmuk riding light, his pony can the better take the extra weight.

I sent this scatter-brained Kalmuk up the hill and sat down to wait for him. So we wasted over half an hour in this manner. Then we proceeded, going down into the meadow and across the stream of ice-cold water at the bottom of this valley; then we climbed up the other side for 600 feet, over a hillside

covered with wild flowers; there followed another dip of 500 feet and a rise of the same distance, and from the further end of a little plateau (from 2) we saw sheep, and sank down flat behind the stones. They were over two miles away (from 3), across a third valley, just a few feet above a snow patch, which we found to be a fine landmark in the subsequent stalk. We lay thus for a couple of hours, the sheep also lying still, watching the neighbourhood; and I had my usual lunch—a biscuit, a pull at the water-bottle, and a bite from a bulging bundle of sheep meat, which was kept all day in my coat pocket. Powar also had dried mutton.

At last, as afternoon drew on, the sheep rose and grazed down the hill, and again they lay down, only one being in view, the rest beyond the brow. We led our ponies over a mile of open ground at the head of the valley, quite two miles from this solitary sentry. I allowed Powar to set the pace, and kept in line with him, so that we made only one moving spot, from the point of view of the sheep.

Powar went very cautiously, and often stopped dead, for we were in full view; but we gained the friendly further side of the valley and sheltered behind a fold of the ground. Mounting again, we crept slowly along the contour, Powar leading; both our

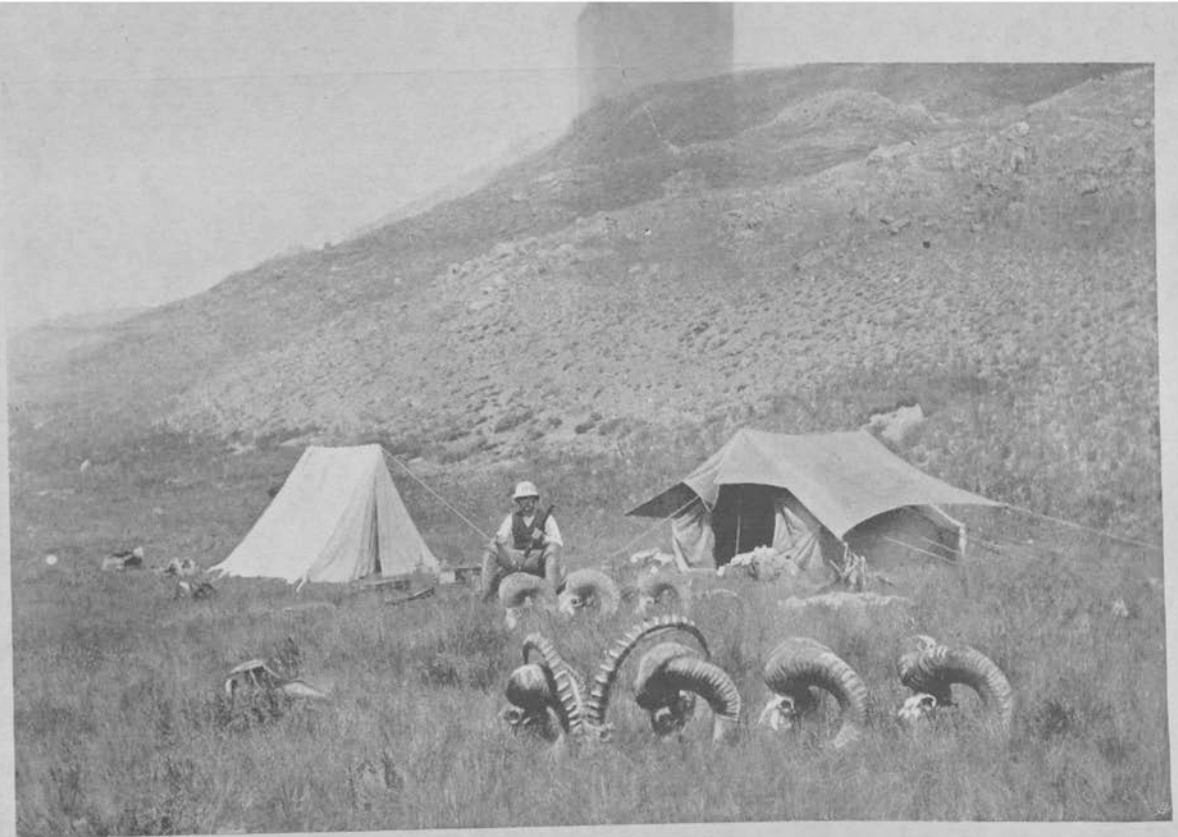
field-glasses were up, and we were constantly stopping to spy. But we at last got below the snow patch; and we had just thrown our bridles over the ponies' necks and left them, to ourselves toil up the hill on foot for the final stalk, when Powar pointed to the skyline three-quarters of a mile away, far above us, on the hill (at 4) on that side of the valley which we had left, and there I saw a queer thing. Through the telescope appeared a big ram's head looking over the brow of the hill straight down upon us. It was quite motionless, and how Powar saw it I do not know; but a look through the glasses, and afterwards a spy with the large telescope, plainly showed, in the middle of the circular field, the well-known form of a colossal ram's head with a grey Roman nose and pair of eyes staring me out of countenance. I felt I could almost see the interested expression of the eyes, the whole pose was so suggestive of quiet watching. He had evidently seen us; then another head came up above the brow beside the first one and stared at me. That is the sort of sight they have. I took my eye from the telescope, and just then the rams' heads turned at right angles, and heads and backs could be seen as they trotted away. They were followed by a string of some sixty grand rams' heads and backs in silhouette

against the skyline. Every one of them passed in review before my telescope, and there was not one which was not a faultless head. Then they took down along the hillside, fully in view, and nearing us, but still keeping on the other side of the valley and five or six hundred feet above us. We let them trot along towards the head of the valley, to where there was not an inch of cover on the great slopes of gravel and grass short as that of a cathedral lawn. Powar was for going after them, but they were now down-wind and thoroughly alarmed, so I held on after those we had been stalking all day. No sooner had I decided to do so than two rams appeared lower down the same hill across the valley and to our left front (at 5), near the junction with the main valley, which formed the road for the day's march of the caravan.

We had the greatest difficulty in getting on after our original quarry, which I was obstinate about, for these two rams last seen were in quite an impossible position with respect to the wind for a successful stalk from where we stood. We kept on up the hill and up the wind, and we climbed for 300 feet; but on getting to the top we found our original flock gone. No doubt they had seen the sixty rams on the opposite side canter away, and had taken the hint and trotted off also.

Thus there had been three separate flocks of rams, and none of them giving a chance of a stalk. My best day's find, and a pretty mess we had made of it! Powar was lost to sight, as he had made a cast back. The two horses were small dots in the distance, standing still where we had left them grazing far below. I took my glass and scanned the opposite valley high up. There were the sixty rams, now walking. The two rams which we had last seen below had left.

Then I saw why; a line of men and pack-ponies were marching up the main valley, at the junction of which the crags from whose top I was spying stood. I quickly scanned them with the glass. Tartars they looked like, probably a wandering army. There were mounted men, with long black coats; no, they were my Kalmuks, with Cattley a hundred yards ahead, doing the day's march. Cattley, who looked like a little black dot, trotted forward to a lake, gun in hand. There were two smaller brown dots at the margin, Brahmini ducks apparently, very like the Indian kind, and so called by my friends in Siberia. The ducks flew away; then I shut my telescope and, keeping the rocks between myself and the sheep, waved my handkerchief fixed on the end of it. After what seemed a long time Cattley looked up and saw



OUR CAMP IN LAKI VALLEY, MONGOLIA

me, and I ran down the rocks in time to stop the caravan behind a grassy mound beside the river-bed near the junction. Then we camped (at 6) under this slight cover, making as little noise as possible, and driving the pack-ponies to graze up-river, where they would be out of view of my sixty rams. These, however, were by now two miles away, at the top of the tributary valley.

We then coaxed some water to boil and had tea; this took an hour, as *tezek* is slow in burning.

I had made an arrangement with Cattley, that, having come so many thousand miles from Europe, I was to succeed in getting two or three good heads before letting him share the ground. However, there were so many rams that there seemed a chance for both, and I claimed the first shot at these sixty, agreeing that after my first shot with the Express rifle he might have a try with the Mannlicher.

Just as we had camped, we had seen many more rams joining the first ones along the skyline of the same high hill, having come across the main valley in full view of the advancing caravan; this was the fourth lot of sheep I had seen that day. We had struck what Demidoff in his book calls "a golden vein" of wild rams.

So we started, Cattley and I and Powar, to try and

stalk these rams, though it was late afternoon. We went down the main valley, retracing the journey of the caravan for a mile, to the edge of another bay in the hills, where we found many derelict rams' skulls; then we turned up a valley to the left, so as to get at the back of the high hill on which the sheep had last been seen, breaking into a walk, an hour or two before. Then we put our ponies (mine had been changed) at the very steep back of this hill; as they breasted it we kept slipping back in the saddles, and our gallant little steeds, put to a slope which probably none but the Kalmuk breed could attempt, were often in danger of overbalancing backwards and falling into space.

When we had topped the hill at last, a search showed that the flock was no longer there; but Powar, with his unerring hunter's instinct, made a long cast for nearly two miles to the very head of the valley. As we neared the place where Powar thought they would be if they were to be found at all, we all began walking our ponies step by step downhill, while we sat in the saddle field-glass in hand. Then Powar jerked himself off his horse and threw the reins over the neck. I had got to know this signal to mean "enemy in sight," and we also dismounted. Then we crawled for fifty yards downwards over steep rocks, and we were in a little fold of the ground (at 7), Powar lying a few

yards forward working with the glass. He quietly beckoned, and I crawled down to him very slowly, making no noise, and he began the usual mysterious mapping with pebbles. He put a large pebble to the right, pronounced the word "bolshoi" (the big one), and gave a wave of the hand to the head of the valley to show the direction of movement. Taking off my hat, I raised my forehead, then my eyes, foresight-bead, and the V of the backsight, and crooked my finger round the trigger. There was a big ram just turning the corner of a rock into full view, 150 yards down the slope. A short wait in this constrained position, and as he moved a step forward in grazing, his shoulder became visible, and I pulled the trigger, hearing the "tell" of the bullet. The left barrel went off at another, a running ram, and hit the rocks twelve feet away a tremendous crack, so slightly elevated had been my rifle.

Then Cattley stood up and had a shot or two at the hindmost ram as the flock galloped down the hill. The ram I had fired at galloped 150 yards, and then fell dead. His horns measured 47½ inches along the curve, 20 inches in circumference, and 26½ inches between tips.

Down into the deep valley they went and up the other side, 600 yards away. Cattley had not appar-

ently scored, and I saw we should not get near them again, as it was now getting dark. So we reluctantly left them, and getting the sheep's head put on to Powar's saddle, we turned our faces to camp. On our way down the valley, where it was already dark, and as we passed a place where the central stream formed a small ice lake, we heard a pack of wolves dismally howling on the top of the high hill behind us.

The 23rd was a blank day of fruitless search.

On the 24th, crossing the stream by which we were camped, we went hunting on the right side of the main valley, and mounted a high plateau, and in a shallow, wide valley we saw a small herd of "yeren" antelopes (Przewalski's gazelle). I got one, but to my disappointment there was only one of the little lyre-shaped horns perfect, the other being an old stump, probably knocked off by some Kalmuk's bullet.

We found a very fine derelict ram's head on the way to camp. The ponies were just being packed, and we marched upstream some seven versts, and camped in a wide valley with an isolated hill in the middle of it.

We saw no game here, and on the 25th we marched another six versts to near the site of Demidoff's Olonur camp. Here we found a small lake deep

down in the hills at the mouth of a long valley, running up to our right into snow peaks, where is the Elan Daba Pass. The plateau just behind camp was called Nam Daba, not to be confounded with the name of the pass just mentioned. It was under Nam Daba that Powar had told us we should find many derelict rams' skulls, much better and more numerous than those we had picked up in the Happy Valley, on the Siberian side, a week before.

I had, on the caravan starting for this new camp, gone out as usual with Powar, this time making for the hills near the Tarkuta Pass into Siberia.

As we neared the mouth of the pass, with the aid of the glasses we spied (from 1, Fig. V.) a small herd of ibex on the green sheep-ground two miles ahead of us (at 2), near the place where the ground began to fall northward into Siberia.

After a long stalk without leaving our saddles, we got to the pass, the sides of which descended in the form of bad ibex-ground; and as we suddenly came to the edge of this descent, which is abrupt, a small goat-like animal started up from some rocks opposite, across a gully, and hopped down the rocks out of view. I could never understand Powar sufficiently to learn what it was; also he was too intent on the ibex to satisfy my curiosity. It may have been a

young ibex; but I suspect it was a little buck called sulti, mentioned by Demidoff, and not yet identified. It seemed dark brown in colour with patches of grey, to carry small horns, and to negotiate the rocks like an African klipspringer; but whether the "sulti" is a rock-climbing animal, or whether it lives in the open plains, I do not remember; and we never saw anything of the sort again. We got to a steep, rocky descent (at 3), and here Powar, crawling forward, saw a curious thing. He said there were five ibex down one side of a ridge grazing, and five wolves asleep on the other side of the same ridge, and close below us.

Powar and I constituted ourselves a council of war —strictly carried on by the sign language—for our Russian was equally limited on both sides, and I had only mastered three words of Kalmuk. He was rather dramatic, and made the motion of shooting at the ibex, then howled and said "Volk" (wolf), and grabbed hold of my waistcoat and went through the motion of worrying it. This was pretty clear; it was a matter for choice; but if I elected to fire at the ibex, the wolves would come and tear us to pieces.

This seemed absurd, so to test the matter I chose the ibex. Looking down, there on the face of the precipitous cliffs was a fine buck ibex, stepping down

from a high rock on to a ledge. The tops of the horns of a few others were just visible over the rocks.

I fired at this one and heard the bullet "tell," and away went the herd down the face of the rocks, and down the 500-foot slope of detritus at their base, then across the stream and up 1,000 feet of the sides of a stone shoot on the other side. Very slowly they had to go up this, for it was fearfully steep even for ibex; and we watched them carefully with the big telescope. There was no wounded one with them, that was quite certain. They reached the top, which was corniced with snow, and disappeared over the narrow ridge to the next precipitous valley. The wolves I never saw.

We now climbed down to the spot where the buck had been standing. There was blood on the rocks, but though we searched the hill from top to bottom, we did not see this ibex again. Powar was always most unwilling to follow a trail, and was particularly so in this instance; for he had at first said there was no hit, and, like the obstinate and contrary Kalmuk he was, when he had been proved wrong he became sulky.

By one o'clock we found ourselves at the bottom of the valley by the stream margin, while the ponies were far behind on the hill above where we had left

them, so Powar went up to get them, and then we rode to the head of the valley and passed round to the corniced ridge where the herd had disappeared.

Here in front of us (at 4) the rocks fell away into worse ground than that we had left; tooth-like pinnacles of rotten, crumbly rock fell nearly sheer for a couple of hundred feet or so to a long 900-foot detritus slope of very loose, unstable, grey shale. We threw the bridles over our ponies' necks and left them to stand on the narrow ridge; then we crept round the edges of the huge chasm to try and see if we could find the herd of ibex.

At about three o'clock we saw them, far below (at 5), at the bottom of this chasm, which lay in Siberian territory, and we started to negotiate the cliffs. This was a long and tedious business, but as the wind was right and we were above the ibex, there was a good chance of success if we should manage to get down, without mishap, while daylight lasted.

There were many delays, owing to false moves in unsatisfactory directions, and bad weather began to threaten. I dropped the large telescope and it slid thirty feet, denting the metal-work and tearing off the protection of the eyepiece; my knuckles were scratched and bleeding from the sharp stones, and

HUNTER POWAR AND TROPHIES

my feet bruised from the same cause. Powar, in his felt-lined, leather, mocassin-like knee-boots fared better.

The difficulty in getting down was that one had to stick to the steep, crumbling rocks, because the talus slopes between them, though lying at a less steep angle, were entirely composed of loose shale and clinkers, probably fifty feet in thickness, and at every foothold, no sooner was the weight put on to the foot than the surface rubbish began to slide. This might start one on a long roll, or it might loosen a boulder, the noise of which would frighten the game.

We got down at last, and seeing what appeared to be a fine buck standing on a pinnacle, I knocked him over dead with one shot, and the body slid down two yards and fell forty feet, sheer, on to the slope of the rocks below, without, however, breaking the horns. The herd bolted.

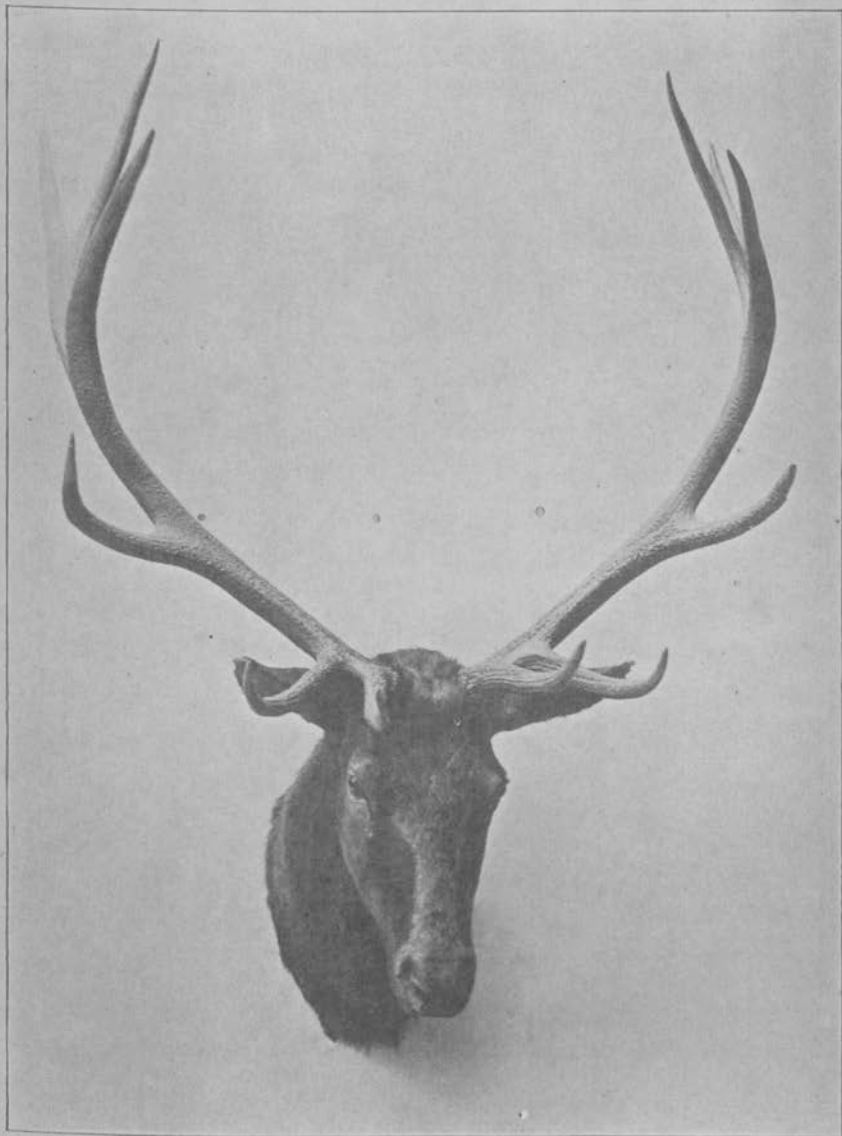
After all my trouble I was disappointed, for the horns proved to be only 34 inches long.

It was now late afternoon and beginning to snow. We had to decapitate the ibex and carry the head and skin up some 1,100 feet to the ponies, while we were obliged to leave the meat to be sent for next day.

We had many hundreds of feet of the dangerous talus slopes to surmount, and we could hear water trickling underneath our feet. The climbing took us from five till half-past six in the evening. As we reached half-way, the weather settled down to a thick snowstorm. Both the crumbling rocks and the shale slopes had become slippery, and every foothold was a temporary moving one which had to be left quickly for another. The labour was very great, but by dusk we threw ourselves down on the ridge at the top (at 4), utterly done.

The ponies, good little nags, had been standing patiently in the snow for five hours, exactly where we had left them. They were not grazing, not having found anything but rocks and snow; and they seemed as cold and weary as ourselves. They had no blankets, as the Kalmuks, though they are kind, do not pamper them; and their tails were turned, when we found them, to the snowy wind.

I discovered some meat in the holsters and shared it with Powar, and soon, the snow moderating, we rode homewards in the evening light, over a swampy plateau of gravel, wet clay, and reindeer moss; and here we saw a fine pair of bleached horns of a maral, or Asiatic wapiti stag, showing that here had once been the haunt of this fine animal, before the Chinese



SIBERIAN WAPITI (CERVUS CANADENSIS ASIATICUS)

trade in horn-medicine had driven him to the forests. We got back safely after dark to our new camp, by the small lake below the Nam Daba plateau.

On 26th July we kept to the sheep-ground. The changeable weather continued, and we had not been out two hours when it came on to snow heavily.

The open green hills broke into tooth-like rocky eminences here and there, and under one of these we took shelter (at 1, Fig. VI.).

We had waited an hour, when we suddenly saw appearing through the mist of snow a quarter of a mile away (at 2), and coming towards us, a moving dark mass. This I thought must be a wandering troop of mounted Mongolians marching four abreast, though I did not stop to wonder why they should take military order; but I was down on the ground with the telescope in no time, and saw at once a dense mass of great heads and horns. They were trotting straight through the mist towards our position, over a saddle, along the opposite side of the shallow valley, which was overlooked by the rocks under which we had taken refuge. These rocks formed a good background to khaki and brown-coloured clothing, so we were not seen in the dull light.

Then they seemed to get a slant of our wind and turned up the hillside away from us, and we lost sight

of them. The snow continued for two hours more, and falling through comparatively warm air, it lay just thickly enough to temporarily whiten the face of the country. As it cleared, we crept out of our shelter and searched the opposite slopes; but the sheep were gone, and as they were down-wind, we gave them up.

We now turned our faces to the north, and before long we found a flock of rams a mile away out in an open plain, which was two miles wide. They were quite unapproachable.

We went on for several miles to the Tarkuta Pass, and then turned back.

On the road home, at two in the afternoon, we came upon another large flock of rams. They were (at 3) about 800 yards to the west of the rocks under which we had sheltered during the snowstorm, and quite unapproachable from where we were. To get near them we had to go down into the main valley, at the bottom of which, four miles away, our camp lay. Then we rode along the contour of the valley side, under some cliffs strewn with derelict sheep skulls, and above a string of small lakes which shone like pearls. This seemed to be Demidoff's Lake Valley, so I will call it by that name. After this détour of two miles, we turned at right angles up a valley till we were again on the plateau, on the opposite side of the

flock. Here (at 4) we left our ponies grazing under the rounded summit of a hill, and climbing to the top, we lay watching the flock with our glasses (looking east). It was now three o'clock.

The position which the sheep had taken up was an instance of their wonderful cleverness in the utilisation of ground. To the south of us the open valley rose eastwards towards a saddle at its head, and on this saddle (at 3), on our side of an outcrop of rocks, were the sheep. Over this saddle and behind the rocks the ground sloped down to the east. To the south of the sheep the further side of our valley rose in a mile-long open slope to a point 400 feet above them. To the north of them the ground rose a little, and then it fell in a hollow slope to a wide plain. The wind was blowing towards us over the backs of the sheep from the crags behind, in a westerly direction. So with the wind coming from beyond the crags over the only ground which they could not see, and every inch of the short-grassed, mile-long slopes in every other direction being under their gaze, they would be quite unapproachable till such time as they should choose to get up and move towards better ground.

At about four o'clock two of the largest rams rose and stretched themselves, and walked undecidedly

forward, sniffing at the air. It was quite plain, through the large telescope, that they were comparing notes with each other about the proper direction for the afternoon grazing of the herd. Two staff-officers selecting points to march upon could not have been more clear in their pose. The leader walked a little way down the valley towards us; but the other ram stood and looked up at the crags to the east. Then No. 1 went back and joined No. 2, and they both moved together up the long slope to the south. Then the whole herd got up by twos or threes, stretched their limbs, and steadily grazed after the two leaders.

We watched them slowly mounting the easy slope of the hill in a long straggling bunch (towards 5); then we shut our glasses and ran down to the ponies. Cantering quickly, we made the best of our way back down into the Lake Valley behind us, and so along under the bluffs to near our original position, where we had sheltered from the snowstorm in the morning; and after many rides and counter-rides, to get into a favourable position on the high ridge towards which they must be grazing, occupying till nearly six o'clock, we left the ponies and crawled down to a crag overlooking a small gully (near 5), up which we had spied them coming. The range was 200 yards. They were all fine rams, so that it was difficult to choose

between them; but the leader had his horn-tips sticking well out from his face, and I recognised him as one of the two which had before got up to lead the herd, and accordingly covered his shoulder and fired. He made off down the hill with the flock, and as they were running they bunched up so that, in sporting phrase, "a blanket would have covered them." I would not fire again for fear of only wounding, which would have been unsportsmanlike under the circumstances. Then I ran down the hill. The light was failing, and my hunter had sat down and given up the hunt. I could see he was convinced that I had missed, nor could we find any traces of blood.

But I had heard the sound of the bullet striking, and knowing the great power and accuracy of the rifle which I was using, a ·450 cordite Express by Holland and Holland, I kept on for a mile, running alone, till quite near the stream at the bottom of the same valley which we had been manœuvring round all day. Then I saw him crossing the stream and going up the valley to the right, while the remainder of the herd had crossed lower down and climbed up to the crags at our afternoon watching-place.

I ran on, now getting very tired, and firing two or three shots in the evening light; but my firing was so unsteady and the distance still so great for a sporting

rifle (over 200 yards) that I desisted. I walked on up the valley, and last saw this grand ram standing in silhouette on a crag half-way up a precipitous bluff (at 6) which overlooked the stream. It was now growing dark, and I made my way back up the hill to look for my hat, telescope, Zeiss glass, and overcoat, all of which had been dropped at various points. Having collected these, I waited for the hunter, who brought down the ponies, and we followed our valley down to its junction with the Lake Valley, and then turned to the left, and reached camp in the dark at a little before eight. I was resolved to go after the wounded ram on the morrow. As we entered the Lake Valley we heard a pack of wolves hunting round the valley in full cry, as jackals do round an Indian station.

Next day, the 27th July, we accordingly started up the valley from camp, calling on the way at the high rocky bluffs, on the proper left side of Lake Valley, under which I had seen so many sheep-skulls. This is probably the precipice mentioned by Demidoff.

By a careful search over all this ground, and by an examination of a few hundred derelict sheep-skulls, I am led to believe that the wolves, when once settled down in pursuit of a sheep, drive him to these rocks where they have their lairs, and kill him there for

convenience, and so that the young wolves can share the feast, just as in hunting books on South Africa

DERELICT OVIS AMMON SKULL PHOTOGRAPHED, AS IT WAS FOUND, IN A RAVINE

we hear of eland bulls being driven to a Boer camp and then shot down near the waggons.

That the sheep are killed in winter by avalanches would not account for what we saw; for some of the

sheep, whose skeletons were with the skulls, had only been killed quite recently, in the late spring, and in spots where avalanches could not have occurred. As we approached one skeleton, that of a ram with a fine

HILLS, AT THE BASE OF WHICH 150 SKULLS WERE FOUND, LAKE VALLEY

head, a wolf ran away from it in full view, and there were shreds of dried meat-fibre still sticking to the ribs.

In the valley under the slopes, for the distance of a mile or so, I estimated that there were about 150 skulls, of all ages; some were rotten with time, the

skeletons having long since been carried away piecemeal; some had been killed within the year, or even a week or two before our presence here.

There seems to be no other way in which to account for this extraordinary fact, that the rams go to one place to die, unless we accept the theory that they are driven there by wolves or men.

SKELETON OF OVIS AMMON, KILLED BY WOLVES, AS IT LAY

In these places of skulls we sometimes saw several heads together in one spot, lying in a group, as if the sheep had defended themselves together. The skeletons are nearly always lying on the back—the bodies, no doubt, falling in that position because they are borne down by the horns, which, with the skull, weigh as much as forty pounds.

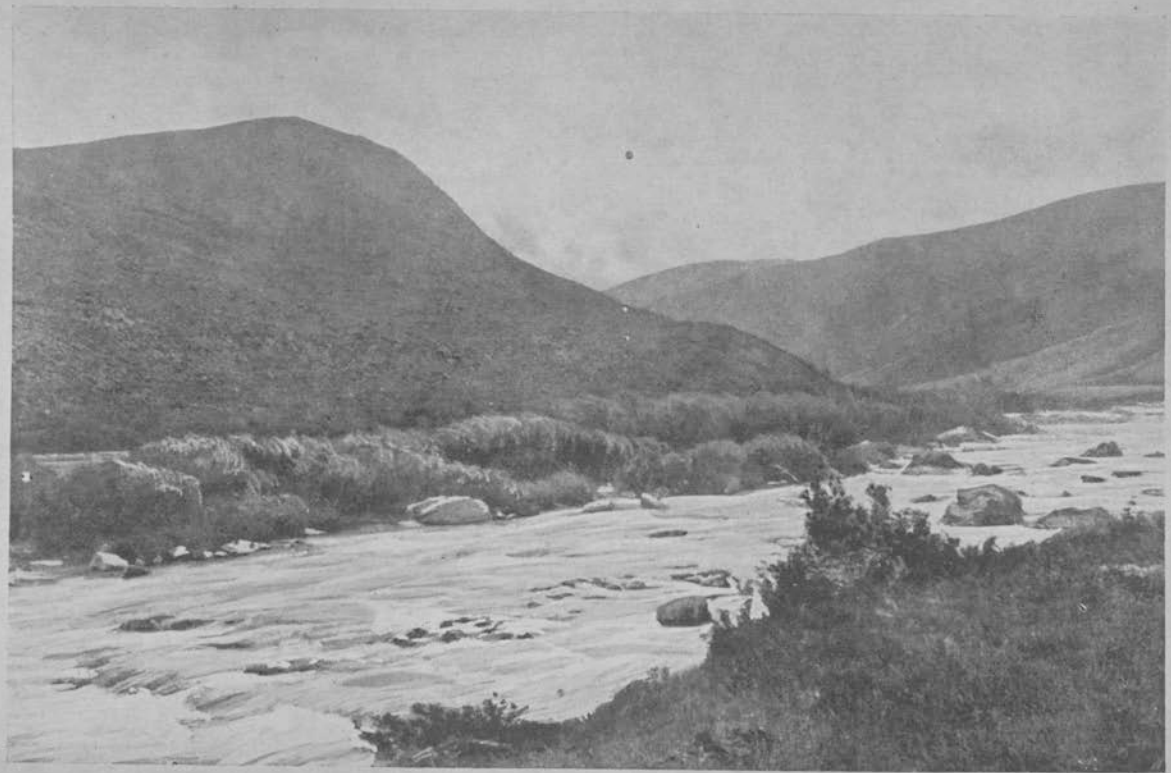
It is said that in certain valleys the sweep of the

wind prevents the snow from lying deep over the grass in winter, that these favoured grazing spots are resorted to by the sheep, and many die there. But if this were the correct explanation, there would also be many skeletons of ponies which had been driven out to pick up their food in these spots in winter. Besides, I could see no reason for the wind sweeping this rather sheltered valley clear of snow.

The horns of the dead ram from which we had driven the wolf were so perfect and so evidently fresh that we kept them, with two other fairly fresh horns; also we saved two derelict heads, with the horns rather bleached from lying out through one or two winters, and recognisable as picked-up heads, but on the whole in very good condition.

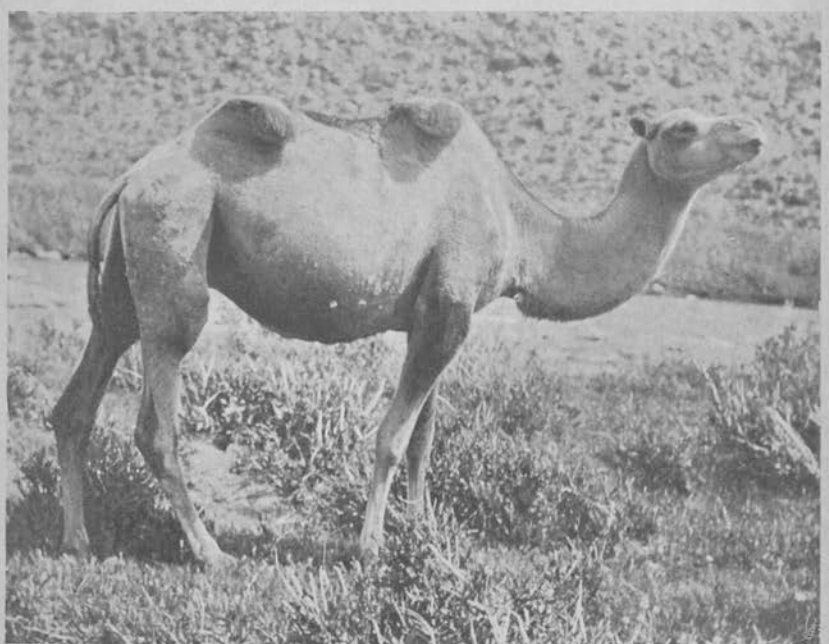
We had brought some pack-ponies to take any heads which we should pick up back to camp; and with Powar and two men, and a pack-pony, I held on for the rock where I had last seen the wounded ram late on the evening before. We heard wolves as we went up the valley, and approached the rocks cautiously, with a view to getting a shot at a wolf on the carcase, should the ram have died.

As I came to a rock opposite to the one on which I had last seen him, I put up the glasses—and there he lay, a grand ram, exactly on the spot where



IN THE TARKUTA PASS

he had been seen standing on my giving up the chase. He must have dropped soon after I left him, and died without going further. The wolves had found him out and had begun on his ribs, but had not attacked



KIRGHIZ CAMEL

the fine head. His horns measured 50½ inches along the curve, 18½ inches in circumference, and 34 inches between tips.

Leaving the two Kalmuks to get home the head and some meat, much of which was still undamaged, we held on, the hunter and I, but were not successful

in finding any more sheep; and at noon we returned to camp.

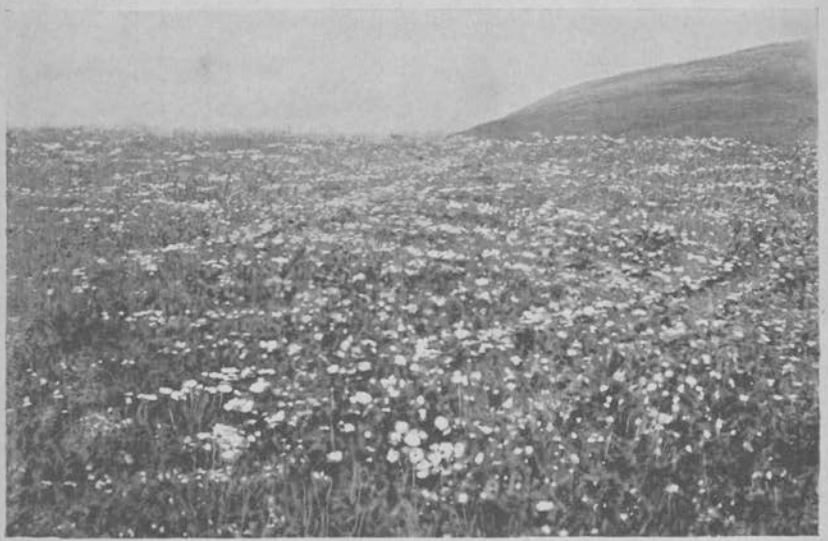
On the 28th we moved about ten versts down the Tarkuta Pass and camped again in Siberia. With our last camp we had formed altogether ten camps in Mongolia, the camps themselves generally at about 7,000 feet or more. I lent the hunter to Cattley,

A KIRGHIZ

who, however, did not score, though he saw some rams.

On the 29th Powar and I went back to pay a visit to the place of skulls, and took some photographs. Then we crossed the Nam Daba plateau, towards the place where we had got our last ibex, overlooking the Tarkuta valley. Here Powar saw a wolf, lying asleep in the open plain. We managed to stalk in to 200 yards, but he got up, and as my finger pressed the trigger he saw us, moved away, and the shot missed. It was

disappointing, as I wished to bring home a wolf's skin. I never saw him again; but while looking for him we came on the freshly killed carcase of a ram, part of which he had eaten. The head and horns were good, but the head-skin was already spoilt. This ram must have been killed two or three days before.



WILD FLOWERS ON THE SIBERIAN ALTAI

On 30th July Cattley and I went out together for a last hunt on the Mongolian plateau above, before turning our faces towards Kosh-Agatch.

We made for the place where I had hit an ibex on the 25th; and while looking about there we saw another herd of ibex, some of them carrying very fine horns

—quite 42 inches in length, which is as large as they seem to grow in these hills.

The ibex bolted, but we galloped about after them round the head of one valley after another, only to lose them at last. We moved camp about six versts down the pass.

On the 31st July I tried the highest mountains to the west of camp, but meeting only with female ibex, and the weather being very bad, I came down early. A party of five Kirghiz horsemen had lost one of their number on the mountain, and were galloping about hallooing and screeching in a very wild way.

That afternoon we began another march, which was continued late into the evening, when we came on the first pines we had seen for weeks, clothing the sides of the pass; and we also found several Kirghiz "yurtas" and horsemen, and great flocks of goats, yaks, horses, and a few double-humped camels. The dogs here were very savage, and three of them, running out from a group of yurtas, attacked Powar when he was quite a hundred yards or more away, and made his pony jump about so that it looked as if he would be off. We had tea among the Kirghiz, who seem to be very rich people, and far more intelligent than the Kalmuks; and then resumed our march, and camped under some rocks in the moonlight by the rushing Tarkuta stream at nine p.m.

ON THE CHUYA

While in this pass I had been shown a spot where the Russian and Chinese local authorities meet every year for business.

On the 1st of August we marched past Powar's own Kalmuk village of "yurtas," and then getting into the open, we crossed the very tedious Kosh-Agatch plain, and reached that place at about six p.m., having done some fifty-five versts from our first camp below the top of the Tarkuta Pass.

CHAPTER X

HOMEWARD

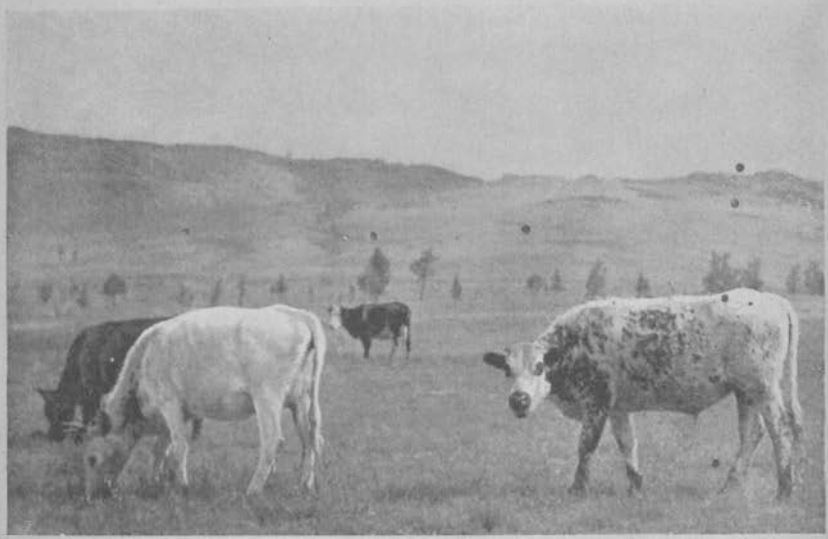
KOSH-AGATCH, which is a most convenient base from which to set out for sheep-ground, is the nearest Russian village to this part of the Mongolian frontier.

There is a Russian Customs official and also some half-dozen Russian merchants, notably Mezentsoff and Co. and the Mongolian Trading Company. The chief trade is in various kinds of wool (including that from camels), which is collected in parcels from the Kirghiz and Kalmuks, washed in Kosh-Agatch, and exported to buyers in Bisk, who resell it to agents in Russia. Long camels' hair is exported for the manufacture of machine-belting in Russia. A great deal of felt is made by Kalmuks and Kirghiz.

There is also, I believe, a considerable trade in brick-tea, and there is communication by road between Kosh-Agatch and the important Mongolian town of Kobdo.

Altogether, Kosh-Agatch, which is now only a small collection of log-houses with a small church, is

likely to grow in importance now that the new road, the "Chuisky Tract," has completed the through wheeled communication between Kosh-Agatch and Bisk, which is itself at the limit of navigation on the Obi, and in direct water communication with the Siberian Railway.



ALPINE PASTORAL SCENE, NEAR THE CHUYA

The Siberian-Mongolian trade is likely to increase very considerably as time goes on. There are firms in Bisk dealing extensively with Kobdo in Mongolia. The Russians are supposed to be sending an important commercial expedition in that direction this year. The *Debats*, in an article on Russian railway

extension, dated 27th October last year, credits Russia with a scheme to build a railway from Andijan in Russian Turkestan, passing by Kashgar and Lob Nor, to a point on the Hoangho; that is, pointing direct towards Pekin and the Gulf of Pechili, and this, with the new line from Orenburg to Tashkent, which the same article says will be completed in 1904, would give Russian traders great advantages in China proper. The route looks difficult and expensive; but if such a line were ever contemplated, it would run at the back of Mongolia, cutting that great territory off from the south and throwing it into the Russian sphere. Mongolia, with its broad, pasture-covered valleys, rather thinly populated, and lightly held by a few Chinese officials, looks peculiarly adapted to the easy advance of Russian influence when the time shall come.

Mezentsoff and Co. have a very good shop at Kosh-Agatch, stocking all general merchandise, including such things as clothing, cooking-pots, shovels, and all stores likely to be useful to the Russian peasant settler or his wife. The manager, Bookin by name, was most friendly to us, lending us an empty house and taking charge of money and superfluous kit during our absence.

While here I took many photographs, and found the

ON THE CHUYA

peasants not averse to the process. They would come to me dressed in their best clothes, looking sheepishly tidy, and about as comfortable as if it were the dentist and not the photographer they were going to see; and they would ask me the inevitable question, "Skolka stoit" (what will it cost?). They looked disappointed when they heard it would cost nothing.

While we were waiting at Kosh-Agatch reorganising our kit, we heard of another traveller coming up the Chuisky route, and later this turned out to be Lord Ronaldshay, who arrived from Bisk with a small and workmanlike caravan, and went on to the sheep-ground which we had just quitted; we gave him some information, and our hunters and cook, whom we had just paid off, joined him. He had just made a long journey through Persia, and had been shooting in Turkestan.

We ourselves finally left at noon on Tuesday, the 4th August, and marched to Kouaktenar. The river gave no trouble this time.

On 5th August we spent the morning at Kouaktenar taking photographs, and at noon on the same day we marched to Kurai. On the way we passed a long line of settlers' waggons and mounted Russians and Kalmuks, several hundred men in all. These were the workmen employed on the Chuisky Tract, which

had now got thus far south. They were trekking from one centre of activity in road-making to another.

It reminded me of the pictures of the emigrant trains on the American prairie; for the Kalmuks look very like the pictures of North American Indians. The Russian men were lanky, bearded peasant settlers in black, broad-brimmed felt hats. The browner Kalmuks were either in their own dress or in Russian dress, according to the extent to which they had become Russianised.

Both in the Kalmuk country, where the people are not rich, and among the Kirghiz, who are, everybody rides; you see some of the richer Kirghiz or Kalmuk women going journeys with their men. They pass you at speed on pacing ponies; the little ladies, who are of Mongolian type, and who would not be particularly noticeable when not riding, sit upright, riding astride in their native dress of furs and scraps of silk. It is quite a graceful exhibition in its way, they seem so thoroughly at home in the saddle.

We crossed the great plain and reached the Kurai house late in the evening.

On the 6th of August we left at nine a.m. and marched to Chibit. We passed through beautiful pine-scenery; among the principal kinds of trees I think I recognised spruce-firs. There were small flat river

ROCKS FALLEN FROM DENUDED CLIFFS, AIGULAK

terraces of short lawn-grass, with tremendous red cliffs crowned by pines. Grazing cows gave these lawns a Swiss appearance, and snow-mountains, flaming white in a blue sky, rose above all. We crossed charming streams, rippling over brown pebbles.

In one pass the new road, with its timber side-posts winding down through the forest, reminded me forcibly of Murree in the Himalayas.

We rode through valleys overhung by cliffs which were rotten, and pieces of which had broken off. The fragments lay spread about below in confusion, showing curves of incline and anticline. Some were as much as twenty feet cube, and were half buried in the flat grassy surface of the plain. Sometimes they had taken a succession of leaps across the valley, a quarter of a mile wide, and apparently jumped the river lying below sloping banks on that side, from which, owing to its easy slope, they could not possibly have come, and the high cliffs on the side from which they had started on their journey long ages ago were now too far back to have projected them, and must at the time when these masses broke off have been some hundreds of yards nearer the river; the denudation here must be very rapid. We passed *brûlée* forest where fire had destroyed the pines and they had been

uprooted by the first storm. They lay in hundreds, in all positions, in a tangle of broken timber. We galloped at full speed over the perfect sward of the grass terraces, or made our ponies go at a fast pacing trot.

From Chibat we went, on the same evening, to Aigulak, hoping to make a moonlight march forward from there, as the moon was full and fine weather promised a beautiful scene; but there was a difficulty about ponies.

We started, however, on the 7th of August at 5.30 a.m., marching to Iyedra with one baggage cart, the rest of the baggage on ponies, and ourselves riding.

On this march we continued near the Chuya, going through gorgeous scenery. We passed ground like the bear-nullahs at the mouth of the Sindh valley in Kashmir. I could see no difference at all—steep pinnacles of grey rock falling sheer for hundreds of feet to pine-slopes.

There was a little wheat cultivation alternating with alpine pasture in the valley bottom.

At one place, where the track dipped down to the margin of the rushing Chuya, we found birch growing luxuriantly in clumps and masses close to the water's edge, not at the top of the timber-line, as it does in Kashmir.

IN THE FOREST, KOUAKTENAE

The Chuya, breaking constantly throughout its course into tossing, foaming cataracts, lends itself to fine scenery, the snow-white rushing water contrasting well with the dark pines behind.

I passed the Ispravnik (who would be called a District Superintendent of Police in India) some time in the afternoon, in his carriage and in white official cap and clean uniform, following the advance of the road labourers, whom we had seen leaving Kurai. It was expected the road would be completed up to Kosh-Agatch by the end of August. Indeed, one could already drive all the way.

Before reaching Iyedra, when I had turned aside to photograph some cattle and goats in the early morning light, I came upon Kalmuk huts and the curious sloping scaffoldings on which are hung pony-skins with the legs waving in the wind. Matai, my Kalmuk tent-boy, told me that a heathen Kalmuk priest goes round to the hamlets, selecting at each hamlet for sacrifice the most promising colt. The more treasured the pony is by its owner the better the sacrifice. The superstitious Kalmuk submits calmly to the order. Matai said that nowadays the young pony is thrown and smothered and then skinned.

At Iyedra we had a vexatious delay, owing to the Ispravnik having been obliged to take on all the

available ponies. But our drivers, after some trouble, agreed to take us the same afternoon to the Katun with the original ponies and the cart; and we got as far as the wild Chuya gorge, just above its junction with the Katun, eight versts above the Katun ferry. The camping-ground was most difficult to choose by night on the stone-strewn slope. We had ridden beside the most beautiful river-terraces all day, following the Chuya.

On the morning of August 8th we marched up a very bad pass, where the road was in a shocking state, to Ust-Iniya, the Kalmuk village opposite the ferry. Whatever may be said about the speed with which the Chuisky Tract has been made, there is no doubt it is insufficiently drained, and much will be washed away by the melting of the snows next year. My tent-boy, Matai, lived at Ust-Iniya; and I found, to my surprise, that he was a rich man, owning a large house, where he and his wife looked after several Russian peasants and their families, as paying guests, doing their cooking for them. The white men worked for him; as when he was told to get several rams' skulls cleaned, it was the Russians who did the dirty work under his superintendence, which shows also how good-natured they are. He wore a gorgeous purple-coloured shirt, and would not lift a finger for us that

RIVER TERRACE, CHUYA

day, posing as our guide rather than doing his duty as my tent-boy. But we were so amused at his vanity in his own home that we did not show him up. His wife gave us most excellent tea, with bread and eggs and a young turkey for dinner. These Russianised Kalmuks were living exactly as Russians do, in the same houses with Russians, dressing the same, and fraternising on equal terms. They were also what are called "Christian Kalmuks." I was much impressed by this, after having been used to the race

MATAI, A RUSSIANISED KALMUK

separation which the caste system brings about in India. It is not the fault of us Anglo-Indians that we do not fraternise with the natives. This is chiefly caused by this caste system, which prevents the ordinary native from being really on intimate terms with any caste but his own. These Russians and Russianised Kalmuks seemed to get on excellently together, and I could see no outward sign of race hostility whatever.

We rested all day on the 8th of August at Ust-Iniya, and on the 9th we crossed the ferry and drove to Kirkuchi, going through some magnificent forest and then over a high pass. We found great difficulty in getting on from Kirkuchi, it being now the season for taking in hay for the winter; and men, carts, and ponies were scarce, as we were to find out all the way to Bisk. We got off, however, the same evening from Kirkuchi and drove over the other high pass to Ongudai, where, after numerous delays and a disagreeable night drive, we arrived at one a.m. on the 10th of August.

We started again at nine a.m. the same morning and drove thirty-five versts to Ust-Tinginsky; thence on twelve versts more to the Tinginsky Lake, where I got out my Indian tiffin-basket and canteen and cooked under the pines, while Cattley bathed in the

THE UPPER CHUYA, NEAR AIGULAK (LOOKING DOWN-STREAM)

lake. Going ten versts further, we reached Peschan at eight p.m. We passed two minor police officials coming down the road from Peschan and knew they had taken the available tarantasses, so prepared to camp in a meadow, the peasant's house, when we arrived there, turning out to be small and stuffy, and the peasant having quite an unreasonable number of children and other relatives with him in the living-room, while the yard was deep in liquid black mud.

These were damp quarters, but it was a fine day and followed by a fine night.

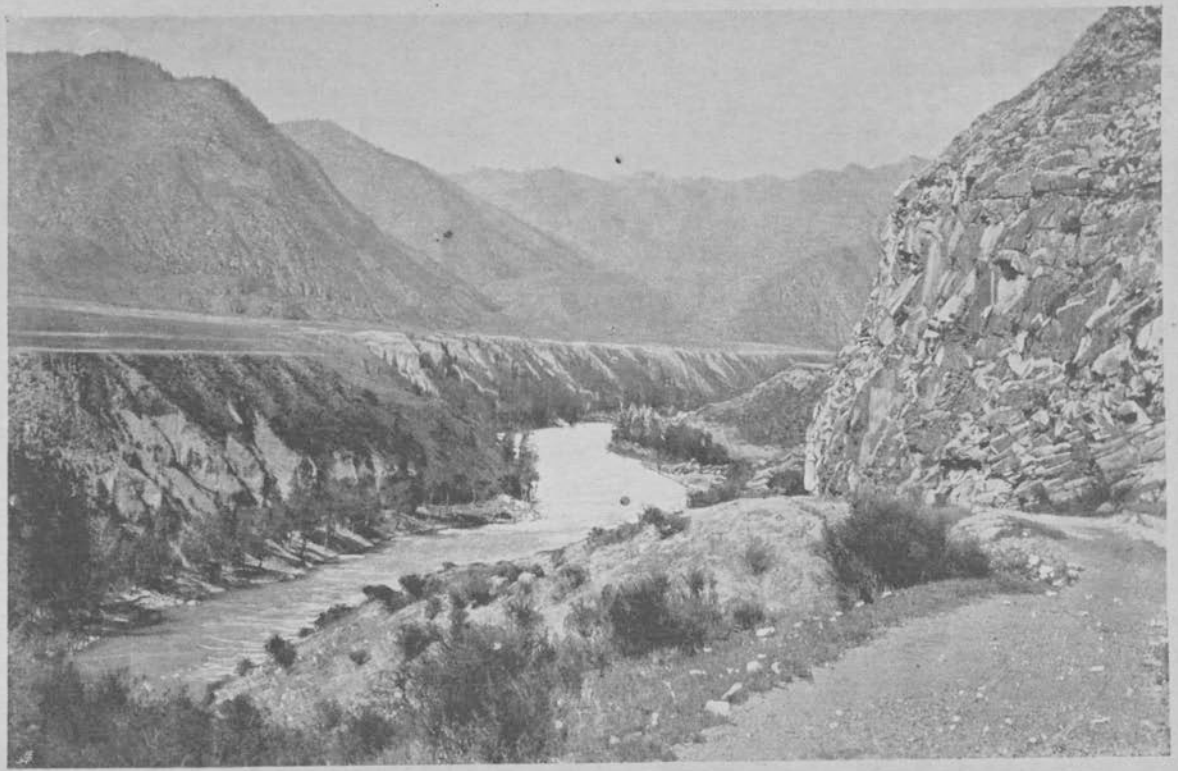
We had great delay next morning, and I was near losing my patience with the avaricious Siberiak, at whose mercy I was in the matter of hiring transport. He was a big, handsome, stiff-backed fellow, very sober just then, and inclined to be nasty over our bargain. But at eight a.m. he condescended, for five times the Government rate of payment, to leave his numerous family, and he drove us for thirty-five versts to Shebalina, through charming scenery, ablaze with wild flowers, but over a horrible road, corduroyed, in the black soil pools where it ran through hilly forest, by rows of round logs—terribly rough to drive over in an open telyeshka, with liquid mud spattering one from head to foot.

We changed our horses and baggage-carts at

Shebalina, but retained the same driver for our telyeshka.

He was not quite the same though, for here he begged an advance of money, and meeting a friend, came back to us very drunk. This was uncomfortable, as we had a long night's drive in front of us, over dangerously rough roads. Off we started at full gallop, past the margins of torrents and along the contours of hillsides, the two carts with the baggage also racing behind to keep up with us. We drove for several versts like this, in fact all through the night. We made matters a little better after the first wild gallop by snatching the driver's whip and hiding it. Leaving the three horses to "rip," he kept looking back at us and talking when he was not looking for his whip, and becoming good-humoured, he confided to us that he liked the English. "You English," he said, "don't give me any trouble about money; when you know you have got to pay, you pay, and say no more about it; but Russians argue with me all day till I get perfectly tired, though they always have to pay in the end."

We got into a place where a stream had flooded some meadows, and as we galloped at full speed down to this, one of the carts behind got foul of a big rock over two feet cube, lying in the centre of the track.



TERRACES ON THE CHUYA, NEAR ITS JUNCTURE WITH THE KATUN

The clever ponies with quick vision opened out to let it through, but the cart overturned. After some delay in repacking the cart, we got badly bogged in the marsh below, just as our drunken driver was explaining how well his beasts found the way without a touch of the reins. Here there was a delay of two hours, and all hands had to come to the rescue to get the poor animals out. Had they been soft English horses there would have been strained sinews over this work. Then we went on till we stopped at one a.m. on the 12th, and bivouacked in the forest to rest the horses, near Tapuchnei after going fifteen versts. We got off again at five a.m. and drove to Chergi (thirty-five versts from Shebalina), where we stopped for an early tea. This will, I fancy, become a fashionable resort for health-seeking Russians from Siberia. We here met all the peasants going out to haymaking, the women and children riding pillion fashion behind the men.

We went on again at eight a.m. to Altaiskoe, forty-five versts more, arriving there at 3.30 p.m. Here we parted with our driver, who had now become sober and contrite, and worked well in getting new carts. He insisted on shaking grubby hands with us several times as he left, saying he liked the English and that we were his father and mother. At least,

the oriental sentiment was there; and this sort of thing seemed funny, coming from a big, burly Mongol with blue eyes and light tow-hair, who was not a bit afraid of us. He had made us pay five times the usual Government rate for the pleasure of his society, and had done his best to break our necks, but we were sorry when he left. He had never travelled further north than Bisk, and was a true Siberiak, of splendid physique, born and bred in the country, and very independent in manners. But he had amused us so much during the drive that we forgave him.

We got off from Altaiskoe at 4.30 a.m. on 13th August and had two ferries to cross over the Katun and the Bi respectively before we reached Bisk, which we did at five in the afternoon after going ninety versts.

Coming from Altaiskoe to Bisk we had used a track some miles further east than the one which we followed on the outward journey. Our return road was over a marshy plain which had earlier in the year been impassable. We left Bisk at eight a.m. on the morning of the 15th of August, arriving at Novo-Nicholaewsk at five p.m. on the evening of the 17th of August, making naturally better time on the down-stream voyage.

Here I parted from my friends, the Cattleys, and

ON THE CHUYA, NEAR THE JUNCTION WITH THE KATUN

steamed out of Ob station on the morning of the 19th of August in the "Grand International." The train was not crowded, so I got a whole cabin without having to pay for the extra berth.

There was a Russian General in the train, to whom the Cattleys introduced me; but, to my regret, he did not speak French; and I thought I should be alone on the trip, when on going into the saloon a kindly voice from "over yonder" invited me to be seated, and I found myself at table with an Englishman coming home from Japan and two Americans making the long tour.

The two latter left us, at Samara I think, to take the steamboat on the Volga, as they were going to the great annual fair at Nijni-Novgorod. I thought this a good idea, and found I should also have two days to spare for a visit to this noted place; but as I had done a river trip before and wished to look after my baggage, I decided to go to Nijni from Moscow by train. As it turned out, my English companion was delayed a day at Moscow waiting for permission to leave Russia to be endorsed on his passport; so we went to Nijni and saw the fair together. We greatly hoped to meet our American fellow-passengers when we got there, but when we arrived we inquired for their steamboat and heard that it had not yet

appeared, so to our disappointment we never saw them again.

We arrived at Moscow at 2.45 p.m. on the 23rd of August and left for Nijni-Novgorod by the night train, taking the hotel guide with us to interpret. We occupied the following day in seeing the sights, returning to Moscow on the evening of the 24th.

The fair at Nijni-Novgorod was interesting enough. But the vague picture of the great fair which I had carried in my mind had been that of a dusty plain with Tartar camps upon it, and long caravans of merchandise, and crowds of Russian country-folk in their carts—a sort of meeting of east and west.

I am told that things have much changed since the merchandise has all come by rail or steamboat. The jail is not the attractive show it used to be before the Siberian Railway was made.

What we actually saw was very different to my idea.

We got out at a fine refreshment-room, worthy of Paris, and had breakfast, and then hired a two-horse brougham and drove through a thoroughly modern city and over a bridge across the Oka River. Here we saw the river fringed by busy wharfs, and hundreds of steamers crowded the fairway. We were told there were many with iron from Persia.

Siberian Roe (Capreolus pygargus)

The Tartar and Persian bazaars were in permanent buildings, very like those of the Bombay bazaars, but the booths were larger and better. We saw Persian carpets and fine bear-rugs. The Persians, I discovered, understood what little Aden Arabic I could remember.

We found the city to be quite as modern as Petersburg, and more so than Moscow. There were electric tramways, and asphalte strips let into the cobble-stones. We had lunch at a restaurant (a club, I think) on a hill. We finished by going to see a warehouse and wharf where there was a large collection of beautifully wrought church bells of great size.

In the evening we returned to the railway station.

We spent the daylight hours of the 25th in the shops at Moscow and in going over the Kremlin. I was stopped when taking some photographs and directed to an office, where a formal permission to use the camera was easily obtained.

At Moscow I parted from my companion, who was going home through Germany, and I left Moscow at ten p.m. on the 25th of August, arriving at Petersburg next morning and embarking on the Bailey Leetham Company's *Zara* (Captain Smith) at three p.m., on the 26th.

We came in for some windy weather while crossing

the North Sea, and passing Gravesend and Millwall by night, we disembarked in the City on the morning of the 1st of September, twenty-seven days after leaving Kosh-Agatch, and three months and one day from the date of leaving Millwall Dock on the outward journey.

BRIDGE OF BOATS AT NIJNI-NOVGOROD

ROYAL SOCIETY
LIBRARY
OF THE
BOMBAY
BRANCH

APPENDIX

ON FITTING OUT FOR MONGOLIA

WERE I starting for the Mongolian frontier now, say for a month's stay on sheep-ground, the kit I should recommend would be roughly as follows :—

Rifle. I should take two—a double ·450-bore Cordite Express, weighing ten and a half or eleven pounds, and a Holland's ·375-bore, five-shot Mannlicher as a second rifle, to rely on in case the first should break down in any way. Do not forget to have attachments and sling fitted to both rifles, as you invariably ride with them, and the sling is indispensable.

So far as I remember, I fired off a dozen cartridges at game during the trip, and bagged five sheep and two ibex. I took ninety cartridges for each rifle, and fired off half in practice at Chagan-Burgaza camp.

If the expense and weight of the Express is objected to, the ·375 would do, with a second similar rifle or a smaller Mannlicher as a second rifle.

The ·450 is, in my experience, the most merciful for large animals; but on this subject I hold a different opinion to that of other equally experienced sportsmen. I still stick to heavy metal, as it is better not to have to inflict a second blow. There is a considerable choice of good makers, but I have gone to Holland and Holland almost always since I

took up my first rifle twenty years ago, and have been perfectly satisfied.

Gun and pistol. I took no gun on this expedition; it means a weight of cartridges, and it frightens large game. The country I travelled in was quite safe, so I could have done without a pistol. In any case, a rifle is good enough for any kind of protection. One hears of there being bad characters in the mining districts, but the peasant-settler community on the Chuisky Tract seemed to be very respectable, and I know nothing about the mining districts.

Telescope and field-glasses. Get a very large telescope—mine was one of thirty-five magnifying power—also two twelve-power field-glasses, one for yourself and one for the Kalmuk hunter, whose eyes will probably be more useful than yours on the ground he knows, however long-sighted you may be.

You carry your own glass loose (without any case) round your neck or in your coat pocket, and stop to use it every five minutes or so as you advance, even when on horseback; your hunter does the same with the second pair.

The telescope will be a source of great pleasure to you during the long hours when you lie watching the wild sheep, waiting for them to rise and graze into positions favourable for stalking. Its usefulness is slightly discounted, when the sun is at high noon and shining fully, by the heat-quiver.

The field-glasses are much less affected by this, so if you wish to save expense get two twelve-power field-glasses only; but be sure and have two glasses of some kind, for Kalmuks are as inquisitive as monkeys, and mine unscrewed and lost one of the object-glasses of one pair, and I should have been in a bad fix had I not brought a second pair.

Camera. I have used at various times, with some success, a half-plate hand and stand camera, either a Ross-Duplex

lens camera or a Kodak No. 4; each double slide to put in separately. Flat films do very well instead of glasses.

I never develop the exposures on a trip, but put them in a storage book with numbered pockets, entering the particulars in an exposure note-book, ready to be developed in England. This is far less expensive and produces far better results, in my opinion, unless you are really an expert, than taking two trunks full of developing kit and chemicals. Further, you cannot get distilled water in camps, or any of the conveniences which the instruction manuals mention; you are usually too tired at night for such work, while you are out looking for game during daylight, and you would have no assistance, as Kalmuks are wretchedly lazy and incompetent servants. I found a good way was to expose three or four films, with widely different lengths of exposure for each important subject.

Clothing and saddlery. As you and your hunter leave your camp of a morning and put your ponies to breast the steep hills, not to return to camp till after dark, you will be comfortably clothed and equipped as follows:—

The hunter, being a light weight, will have your heaviest rifle slung over his shoulder; and horizontally, round his saddle, so that he sits upon it, he will carry your thick waterproof coat, rolled, in the old German infantry fashion, into a hoop with the two ends tied together.

If you take out a camera, your hunter will carry it slung over his saddle. He will have your spare field-glass and a bottle of cold tea for himself, and some cold mutton. The pony and saddle will probably be his own.

On your own pony will be a cheap European saddle, and if you can buy this of Russian manufacture, and throw it away after the trip, you will save both freight and duty. There should be large wallets, in one of which you will put

more cold meat, a small tin of pâté or other delicacy, a small tin of biscuits, a flask, and water-bottle.

On these hills you require a breastplate and crupper. I don't care for a Kalmuk saddle—it is not very comfortable; still, you can make shift with it if there is nothing else.

If it is a hot day your grey covert-coat, which is worn under your waterproof coat, may be rolled and attached to the D's at the back of the saddle; but it is generally cold enough for you to wear the covert-coat, and this is sufficient protection for light showers of rain or snow.

In the other wallet you keep a knitted Balaclava cap to go over the head and shoulders, leaving only the face exposed, a pair of very warm knitted gloves, and a thick neckcloth; also a pair of felt snow-boots, with golosh soles to slip over your boots and putties. All these will be useful if you should have a really bad snowstorm, which is possible, especially if it is late in the season.

I wore no furs; they are expensive, and I found a grey covert-coat, with a thick waterproof over it, and the other accessories above mentioned, kept out the cold quite well enough. Had I possessed good furs I should have taken them with me. If you are going to wait in Mongolia until you can try for the very rare maral stag (the Asiatic wapiti) in the calling season in September, you will require furs.

The clothing you will actually wear, wet or fine, will be as follows: On your head you wear, if you have one, a Cawnpore pig-sticking hat, or a tweed deer-stalker or rough-rider wideawake will do if you are not afraid of the sun.

I always take a Cawnpore hat myself, for the pith is light, good for heat or cold, and very comfortable in hail, rain, or snow, if you put over it the very lightest of waterproof covers to save the pith. When spying game close by I take it off for the moment.

Appendix

You may require a pair of dark spectacles in crossing snow patches on a sunny, fine day, though I did not happen to use mine.

I wore a very thick homespun Norfolk jacket with plenty of pockets and a patch down the back, and a pair of knicker-bocker breeches, khaki-coloured Kashmir putties, and brown ankle boots with red rubber studs in the soles, which keep firm and last as long as the leather round them, while rubber soles come off after two days' use. I used to put a few football nails between the studs, thereby preventing slipping in wet weather. This form of sole I found excellent in wet or fine, and not at all noisy even on rocks. It is only when ibex-shooting that very quiet boots are necessary, as the sheep-ground is pretty well covered with grass every-where, and it is the exception to get nearer than within two hundred yards of sheep.

I had a Cardigan waistcoat, and for underclothing three jerseys, of different thicknesses, two pairs of drawers, and two pairs of socks, the thin ones being worn next the skin and the thick ones outside. Really you want the choice of several thicknesses for the whole journey, for you get tropical heat and considerable cold at various stages. You need not expect terrible cold, but you may get two or three degrees of frost at any time during the warmest months on the sheep-ground, and you may experience the heat of a Swiss summer in the same spot on the same day.

You should carry a bit of rope, clasp knife, about fifteen cartridges, watch, and the various small things which you would usually take when shooting.

Compass and map are not very necessary, as you have so many snow-peaks and valleys as landmarks. Take a good map for camp use. The best is the Russian forty versts (about twenty-six miles) to the inch, sold in sheets, with

index, by Stanford, of Charing Cross; but as it is printed in the Russian character, a day's study of the alphabet and a few days' practice in reading Russian words are necessary; this is quite easy.

Get *Russian Self-taught*, or any similar easy manual. It is also as well to take a few real lessons if you can, enough to converse in broken words with your Kalmuks. You may have the best possible interpreter in camp, but you cannot take him out hunting. You will find that with anyone beside yourself and your hunter you will court detection by the game.

A man to hold ponies is quite unnecessary, and does infinitely more harm than good. You throw the bridles on their necks, or tie the two bridles together, or hobble the front legs; it is all the same, you find the ponies where you left them, even after many hours. These ponies do not appear on the skyline, unless there is a man to put them wrong. If a man is left with them he becomes cold, lonely, and restless at your long absence, or he wants to get you back to camp so that he can "chai pit" (drink tea). Then he appears on the skyline of a hill just as you are taking your shot, and away goes the flock.

The country is generally uninhabited; or even should there be horse-thieves about, the country is big, and the folds of the ground are on a large scale, and you have placed your ponies in some hollow where the sheep cannot see them; so it is very unlikely that thieves would discover them either.

I never take white ponies out shooting, they are too much of an advertisement for the sheep to see. Your Kalmuks will laugh at this, but insist on it.

The colour of the grass slopes is light grey-green, with patches of snow, and the rocks are a dark grey; so some

check pattern of greenish grey homespun is the best kind of material for clothes.

Now we come to your camp, and the men and kit you will find there on your return from the day's shooting.

Tents. I took a double-fly tent, made to my own design in the jail at Jubbulpur, much on General Kinloch's pattern. It is about five feet high, and while in England I had it lined with some Kashmir puttoo cloth which I had taken to England for the purpose. The walls, about eighteen inches high, were provided with pockets which could be unhooked and let down, so that I could turn them under the floor-durrie and prevent the cold air getting in. The semicircular back is made to unlace, so that this tent will do equally for the hottest and the coldest weather. I have used it in the Nerbudda valley, in the Central Provinces in May, and on the Mongolian sheep-ground when it was freezing, and in both cases with perfect comfort.

But you cannot get these results without weight, and this tent weighs nearly a hundred pounds, including the heavy lining. As it turned out, the extra roof and precautions against heat were quite unnecessary, as the weather was more often cold than hot, and my tent was heavier than was necessary.

Seton Karr, who has very practical ideas about kit, had a tent which answered the purpose of our trip better. It was a small green canvas explorer's tent, made by Benjamin Edgington or Silver, I forget which. It was a single fly, made all of one piece, *tente d'abri* shape. It weighed, I suppose, about thirty pounds, and two men could sleep in it.

If you do not know Russian, you will require a companion who does, or an interpreter, and it will be convenient if each of you have a small tent of this kind. Calculating by what I paid at the Petersburg custom-house, the duty on each of

these tents, which is charged by weight, will be about £2. Remember that outer wood packing for tents, saddlery, guns and camera, telescopes, etc., is a mistake, as these things are weighed in their cases, and when you pay duty you pay by weight.

As a matter of fact, my guns and camera were allowed to go free because I was a bonâ fide sportsman, and I think I owe this to the good offices of the British Embassy authorities, acting on my ordinary official application originally sent to the Indian Government, which reached all the different authorities through the India and Foreign Offices. I cannot say whether this would be done again; but I had no special introductions or advantages. I regretted I had not entered the tents and saddles also on the application, as I was charged over £15 for these.

The Kalmuks, of whom one has six or seven all told, take their own tent if they require one.

Tent arrangements. I took no furniture whatever. There is the carpet, or durrie, on the floor of the tent, and a folded blanket or two to soften the inequalities of the ground, and then over these is a sleeping-bag. I bought this at the Army and Navy Stores, London. It is roomy, has "Jaeger" lining inside and waterproof sheeting outside. I was never the least cold in this, and on mild nights put it below me and used the blankets instead.

I had a small horsehair pillow, cased in Willesden canvas, and I put any spare clothing I was likely to want under the pillow. At the back of the tent, in the semicircle, were all my other things—a bag for spare clothing and boots (of which I took four pairs for a month and only used two); a couple of photography trunks for developing, which I never had the energy to use; a small box containing a lamp, candles, and matches, and a pair of screw candle-

sticks; a small toilet-case; a tiffin-basket, about eighteen inches by nine inches by one foot, which I never let out of my sight, but kept clean myself, and I used to lock it up, for the Kalmuks are too dirty to be trusted with table-service. I had a similar basket full of tinned stores.

Outside the tent were a couple of boxes containing spare tinned stores, and also one basket of drinking and another of washing water; and under the outer fly were the two bags into which the tent packed, and spare ropes for storm guys.

I trained a Russianised Kalmuk as tent-boy, but he did very little, and I had to arrange it almost entirely myself and to help pitch it.

I had a canteen of aluminium cooking-pots made in Bombay, but they can be got at Edgington's, near London Bridge. They were generally placed in the charge of the Kalmuk whom we called cook, and he kept them in a dirty state. We were able now and then, when in Mongolia, to buy a sheep from stray Mongols, but we lived principally on our stores, and on wild mutton after my success began. The cook had to produce some cold meat every morning to put into my pocket for the day's outing. For literature I had some miniature editions of Thackeray and Dickens and a small *Arabian Nights*. You want a great deal of reading in the least compass. The sheets of the forty-verst Russian map (Stanford and Co.) were cut to the size I wanted, pasted together and mounted on canvas. I had three or four note-books for accounts and journal writing.

The Kalmuks have a certain amount of kit and food which they bring themselves. You pay them a small sum, but the Kalmuk ponies only graze, and no grain is carried for them. Always inspect the men's food before starting from Kosh-Agatch, and see that they have taken enough. One does not worry about the ingredients of their dinner,

but I imagine brick-tea, wild mutton, brown bread rusks (which you get in Kosh-Agatch), and full toll of anything we had ourselves, about represents their diet. Not only inspect the food, but also see that you have enough pack-saddles for the loads before starting. There are plenty of ponies, but pack-saddles are scarce. They should be part of the equipment of the ponies when hired.

A few pairs of leather saddle-bags, the same which they use for collecting *tezek* fuel, are always hired at the same time as the ponies to take your small things, but you pay extra for them.

Seton Karr brought some Willesden canvas saddle-bags from London for his spare clothing and kit, which were very useful. But I had some empty canvas tent-salitas which answered the same purpose. A pony takes about five puds, say 180 pounds English, when fully loaded, which is twenty pounds more than our Indian pack-mules will carry. It does not seem to distress them at all. They march at a jog-trot, about five miles an hour, and arrive at the end of a thirty-verst march clear-eyed and fresh. But I should calculate 160 pounds per pony, as in India. The Kalmuk followers, who all ride, will willingly carry some of your kit on their riding-saddles.

As regards the composition of your caravan, you will have, with rigid economy, for a month about five pack-ponies, and say three drivers, a cook, tent-boy, and hunter. Were I going again I should take two hunters, working on alternate days; one to look after and clean specimens, and one to go out with me.

There are two good ones, to my knowledge, to be had by applying to the Zaissan, or Kalmuks' magistrate at Kosh-Agatch, namely, Omak, who was Seton Karr's hunter, and Powar, who was mine. They are equally good, I should

say. The tent-boy, Matai, I heard of in Ongudai, and picked him up at Chibit.

There is a Russian, Drushinka by name, who lives at Ongudai, and has done camp-service for more than one traveller, and works well; I have seen him working. He could "rough it" nearly as well as a Kalmuk.

The journey from Bisk to Kosh-Agatch, which will in future, now that the road is finished, be all on wheels, requires special consideration. The stages on the road are some fifteen or twenty miles apart, at small hamlets occupied by peasant settlers, and you change horses and carriages about once in the daytime and at the night halting-place. The route is a post-road for officials, who are charged one and a half kopeks (farthings) per pony per verst. The peasant whose house is selected as a staying-house has to keep up telyeshkas (basket-carts) and ponies. He has to pass all travellers on, sooner or later; but he can charge what he likes to non-officials. For instance, several times I was charged six times the Government rate. You are absolutely at the mercy of the peasant. Of course, charges beyond all reason or excuse would call down trouble on him if complaint were made. But he finds excuses for high charges, and short of complaining, which would cause delay, there is no remedy.

There is another defect in this road as a post-road. The peasant seldom has more than two carriages of any sort, whether tarantass, telyeshka, or telega, standing in his yard when you arrive. If you require so many as three carriages, there is almost certain to be delay. If you have much kit and the road is bad, you may even require three troikas—that is, three conveyances with three horses to each. I had always nine ponies where the roads were bad, and so many are not always forthcoming at once.

Not only at every night's halting-place, but at every changing-place, perhaps twice in the day, there is the same worry, haggling, and uncertainty as to when you will get on.

The accommodation and the food give no trouble at all. You have all your baggage-carts (which go the same pace as the one you ride in), and you therefore have your stores and tiffin-basket with you. All the peasants have brown bread or rusks (which are crisp dried bread), eggs, fowls, and the invariable samovar, which they are most good-natured about, and will bring you, full of boiling water for tea, any time of the day, and renew it whenever you call for it. In this way there is no farmer more pleasant and hospitable than the Russian. He gives you a living-room in a good well-built log bungalow; there is a cushioned settee next the wall, with thick winter clothes of men, women, and children hung on the wall above it—not very inviting to those who are squeamish, but it is the best he knows, and he offers it freely, and will let you fix up camp beds at a safe distance from the wall. I took these with me for the period of the carriage journey, and found them invaluable, but I discarded them while shooting in Mongolia.

Take plenty of Keating's insect-powder. I had heard many complaints of the dirty ways of the mouzhik in Russia, but I am bound to say that in the houses of the Siberian settler I cannot remember anything special in this way, the chief discomfort experienced being in the exceedingly rough washing and sanitary arrangements, which scarcely exist. To set against this, in each large village there is a bath-house which is used periodically, there being a heater which produces as much warm water as you like.

Remember there will be a shop at Altaiskoe, Shebalina, Ongudai, and Kosh-Agatch, and at Bisk there are doctors and a telegraph wire to Europe. The post from Kosh-

Agatch to Bisk is very irregular, supposed to be once a month.

It is a good thing to take plenty of cheap waterproof sheeting or oilcloth to cover yourself and your baggage, in case you should have to face splashing mud in open telyeshkas. These carriages give more freedom, but are not so weather-proof as the hooded tarantass.

The "cup-and-ball" treatment in these springless carriages on the unmetalled roads, about which I had heard so much, did not prevent my enjoying the driving very much indeed. The splendid work of the three little horses, which are in good condition and seldom become distressed; the jingling bells suspended from the "dougah" hoop over the shaft-horse; the rapid, cantering movement and the freedom to look about at the scenery make transit by troika much more interesting than transit by tonga in India, with the overworked, underfed ponies, and the cramped position and awning completely shutting out the view.

You will probably take one man with you, a Russianised Kalmuk, to help you and the drivers handle your kit in changing carriages and to assist generally. We had no one at first; but at Ongudai the chief of police, on whom we called, gave us a man—Stipan (Stephen) by name—who proved a treasure, and took us as far as Kosh-Agatch. Unfortunately he was suffering from an old wound in the leg caused by the kick of a pony, and as it was taking a dangerous turn he was obliged to leave us. He was the only really helpful Kalmuk we met in all this journey, and worked splendidly.

To sum up, as regards the driving journey, try and reduce your kit so as to have only two telyeshkas. You can carry yourself and interpreter and about two hundred pounds of kit (including a tent to sit on) in one, and a servant and

some four hundred pounds or more in the other, provided you have three horses to each conveyance. You and your companion sit in one, with small baggage; while the heavy baggage goes in the other—two horses for each telyeshka on easy stages, a troika each for bad ones. Sometimes you must not be surprised at having to take to a saddle-pony and pack-ponies instead of wheeled conveyance, and when you do you will only be able to travel about twenty-five miles a day, while you will cover seventy English miles a day (say 105 versts) with wheeled conveyance.

Kit—London to Bisk. From London to Bisk, whether you go to Moscow by rail, *viâ* Paris, or by sea, *viâ* Petersburg you will have civilised railways and steamers and civilised passengers all the way, all food and every accommodation being satisfactory.

Take ordinary tweed clothes and a dress suit, which latter you may need anywhere, including Bisk. On leaving Bisk you may leave dress clothes, tweed suits, and all civilisation behind, and get into shooting kit.

Time estimate. If you are going only after wild sheep for three weeks, as I did, the right time to arrive in Kosh-Agatch is about 1st July; but if you want to try new shooting grounds in Mongolia, say for two months, endeavour to arrive at Kosh-Agatch by 15th June, or earlier, though the earlier you travel the more muddy and difficult will be the roads and steamers. I know nothing about winter arrangements. By arriving so early you will get two clear months to work in. Early in August the weather begins to break up. There is likely to be some competition of sportsmen in the future, but there is plenty of room if each man has a separate camp.

The Tarkuta Pass, I believe, presents no great obstacle, but the other passes close and are more or less snowed up

and if you stay too late you may have a difficulty in getting back.

From London to Moscow takes about three days by train; you can find out about this at the International Sleeping Car Company's offices in Pall Mall. If you go by Petersburg the voyage will take about five and a half days, and from there to Moscow one night; but it is as well to allow a whole day for the custom-house at Petersburg.

On reaching Moscow you will find that express trains leave about three times per week, or oftener, for Siberia, and it will take five days to get to Ob station (Novo-Nicholaewsk). The Obi steamers pass that place, going to and fro, every two or three days, and from Novo-Nicholaewsk to Bisk is four days' voyage, changing steamers at Barnaul without any delay, as the two vessels lie side by side, and in changing you walk along a gangway between them. The return voyage from Bisk to Novo-Nicholaewsk, being with the current, occupies only two and a half days.

A day should be allowed in Bisk for making purchases at the shops and arrangements for the drive, and under present conditions, till the staging stations are improved, it will take about ten days to get from Bisk to Kosh-Agatch. If this were a properly constituted post-road for non-officials, which it is not, the journey should not occupy more than six days for the distance, which is some 521 versts (about 347 miles).

Thus if you go by Paris you may take the journey from London to Kosh-Agatch to occupy twenty-eight days, including necessary halts.

I started from London at the end of May, 1903, but by 1st August of the previous year, being then in India, and serving under the Indian Government, I had already made my first arrangements for passports, sending in a formal

application, through the military authorities, to the Foreign Department at Calcutta. This letter stated exactly the route by which I meant to travel, and in what countries it would lie, the names and composition of my party, giving a rough idea of the composition of the caravan in men and pack-ponies. I also stated my age, nationality, full name, and such information as would be required for passports. In due time I received a reply that my application had been sent on to the authorities in England.

By November I was on my way to England on a year's furlough, and lost no time in applying personally to the authorities at the Foreign Office, who had my Indian application, for the Chinese and Russian passports; the latter required a *visé* at the Russian Consulate-General in Great Winchester Street, London, E.C. The Chinese passport (which was made out for self and party) required no *visé*, being issued by the Chinese Department at the Foreign Office. In connection with my official application I received a request from Petersburg to detail exactly the guns and ammunition I proposed to take.

I know nothing about Customs on going overland, as my Customs experience was only on landing in Petersburg. My guns and camera were exempted from duty, as I had come for sport. But whether this is invariably done I do not know.

I asked the gunmaker in London to send a few cartridges to another gunmaker in Petersburg, as an extra precaution in case mine should be delayed in the Customs, but I never used these.

With regard to interpreters, I took none, as I had English friends in Siberia; but interpreters are to be had in Omsk. The best way, failing introductions, would, I fancy, be to

stay a few days in Moscow and call on the British Consul there, and ask for his advice on the matter, and try to get into communication with someone at Omsk who would have an interpreter waiting there. Interpreters ask from two to five roubles a day (take 95 roubles to equal £10). I doubt if a hotel interpreter or guide from Petersburg or Moscow would be of any use for a shooting trip. This business of engaging an interpreter is the great difficulty of the trip. There are some at Tiflis—Caucasus men—but mostly bad, I hear. Prince Demidoff mentions having taken Joseph Abbas, who lives, I think, in Limehouse, London; my acquaintance with him is limited to a few hours at Kosh-Agatch. He seemed capable and to know his business.

Messrs. Thomas Cook, of Ludgate Circus, the well-known Tourists' Agents, who have no office of their own in Russia, were very courteous and helpful in giving me information about the railways and hotels and the tarantass driving rates.

Social arrangements. I think you may dismiss from your mind the necessity of getting private help other than the official help your application would naturally obtain; your application must be very clear, simple, and explicit as to the route and the approximate dates, and what you mean to do when you get there.

I presented myself at the British Embassy at Petersburg and later to the chief official of the Imperial Cabinet for the Altai at Barnaul. For Petersburg official calls it is safest to dress as in London; but at Barnaul I called in a tweed suit, and the General was good enough to excuse me. The really proper and punctilious way, I believe, would be to call in evening dress, even in the morning, and as you may be dining out in Bisk you will probably have one with you.

Also I called everywhere else in tweeds, that is, on the Cabinet and Police officials in Novo-Nicholaewsk, and the head of police, Ongudai. The Barnaul call I should consider indispensable. It is very necessary that your journey and identity should be known by the chief authority, who would then be able to look after your safety in any way that may be required. It is not fair on the authorities to keep them in ignorance. The call was easily made between steamers, there being an interval of a few hours between the arrival from Novo-Nicholaewsk and the departure for Bisk.

The persons to apply to for help in organising a Kalmuk caravan at Kosh-Agatch is the Zaissan, or Kalmuks' magistrate; but the Russian Custom-house officials there would probably help, or the manager of Mezentsoff and Company.

As regards hotels, the following may be named. At Petersburg, the Hotel de France and Hotel de l'Europe; at Moscow, the Hotel de Berlin (which I think rather the cheaper) and the Hotel Slaviansky Bazaar; at Novo-Nicholaewsk there was a small inn, the name of which I forget, but I think it was the Gastinitza Nomera; at Bisk there is the Gastinitza Feodorova; at Kosh-Agatch it is necessary to camp on the plain or borrow an empty house from one of the traders there.

You can get guides who know English, to show you Petersburg or Moscow, by writing beforehand to the hotels, at the rate of five or six roubles per diem.

Expenses. We will suppose a trip of one month on the shooting ground. Take 1st June as starting date (though it is possible to go somewhat earlier). Ascertain dates of weekly steamers from Messrs. Bailey, Leetham, and Company, Milwall Dock, London; and if you go early find out what are the arrangements if Petersburg is ice-bound.

Your dates will be approximately as follows :—

Leave London	1st June.
Arrive Petersburg	6th „
Leave „	7th „
Arrive Moscow (leaving same evening)	8th „
Arrive Ob Station, Novo-Nicholaewsk	14th „
Leave „ (by steamer)	16th „
Arrive Bisk	20th „
Leave „ (by tarantass)	23rd „
Arrive Kosh-Agatch	2nd July.
Leave „ (for shooting trip)	4th „
Return „	4th Aug.
Leave (for homeward journey)	6th „
Arrive Bisk	15th „
Leave „	17th „
Arrive Novo-Nicholaewsk	20th „
Leave „	22nd „
Arrive Petersburg (allowing a day at Moscow to get passports endorsed for leaving Russia, which is done from the hotel)	29th „
Leave Petersburg	30th „
Arrive London	5th Sept.

N.B.—I have allowed nothing for failure to connect trains and steamers ; but there will not be much delay on this account.

The following are the expenses of such a trip, based on what I paid ; but I had no interpreter. They can be obtained, I believe, at Omsk for from three to five roubles per day. German is very useful nowadays, and more so than French :—

	£	s.	d.
Fee for Russian and Chinese passports at the Foreign Office, London, and *visé* of former at Russian Consulate, London	0	13	0
Dock dues and cartage, London	2	10	0
One first return for voyage between London and Petersburg	8	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Purchase in London of a month's tinned stores and liquors for self and interpreter	15	0	0
Two sheets Russian 40-verst map at Stanford's, Pall Mall	0	6	0
Excess baggage, London to Petersburg, 15s., and return journey	1	10	0
Expenses on steamer, messing, etc., both ways	6	0	0
	33	19	0
Equivalent in roubles	322.00		

N.B.—There are about 95 roubles in £10, and 100 kopeks (farthings) in a rouble.

	R. K.
Customs duty at Petersburg on—	
£15 worth tinned stores	42.00
Tents say	50.00
First-class fare for one person going and coming between Petersburg and Moscow	50.24

N.B.—Tickets obtainable at International Sleeping Car Office, Nevsky Prospekt, Petersburg.

Hotel and petty expenses in Petersburg, about two days, including a guide at 5 R. daily	45.00
Excess baggage, say 15 puds, Petersburg to Moscow and back, at R. 1.53 per pud of 36 lbs. English (40 lbs. Russian)	45.90
First-class fare for one person going and coming between Moscow and Ob station (Novo-Nicholaewsk), obtainable at Sleeping Car Company, Moscow	168.00
Excess baggage, Moscow to Ob, for 15 puds at 5 R., 75.00; and for return journey	150.00
Food on train and petty expenses, Petersburg to Ob, and return journey—total, eleven days	28.00
Hotel expenses at Moscow, one person for about two days, including guide, etc.	30.00
Hotel and petty expenses in Novo-Nicholaewsk and Bisk on various halts, say six days at 12 R.	72.00
First-class ticket, one person, Novo-Nicholaewsk to Bisk, and return voyage	38.00

Appendix

	R. K.
Food and expenses on steamer, two persons to and fro, say six days	50.00
Excess baggage on these voyages	12.00
Caravan kit purchased at Bisk and Kosh-Agatch, and rent for house at latter place	68.00
Interpreter (if engaged at Omsk) for second-class rail and steamer both ways between Omsk and Bisk (roughly)	70.00
Conveyance of two persons, one servant, and baggage by tarantasses or pack-ponies (say three carts with three ponies each, or nine pack and riding ponies), 521 versts (roughly 347 miles)	380.00
Ferries, outward journey, over the Ob at Bisk and over the Katun at Iniya; homeward journey, one over the Ob at Bisk and two over the Katun at Iniya and Bisk respectively	4.00
Food for followers for shooting trip purchased at Kosh-Agatch	0.00
Pay of servant from Bisk to Kosh-Agatch and back	100.00
Shooting presents (say six wild sheep and two ibex)	20.00
Mutton and milk on shooting trip (say 3 to 6 R. per sheep)	20.00
Messengers, transport of trophies, and other petty expenses on shooting trip	10.00
Paying off shooting caravan—	
Ten ponies for pack and riding, with three drivers who are thrown in, for one month	100.00
Three drivers' gratuities	6.00
One extra driver, pay	20.00
Felt for sewing round trophies for cart and rail transport and expenses connected with cleaning	10.00
Pay of cook and hunter one month at 20 R. each (10 R. more each if they bring their own ponies)	40.00
Pay of tent-boy or Kalmuk interpreter one month	30.00
Interpreter's pay (if one is taken), sixty-nine days at, say, 5 R. a day (13th June to 21st August)	345.00
Grand total	2,335.14
Roughly	£256

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